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KANSAS KING; OR, THE RED RIGHT HAND.

BY BUFFALO BILL, (Hon. Wm. F. Cody.)
Author of "Deadly Eye, the Unknown Scout," "The Prairie Rover," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

RED-HAND, THE SCOUT.

ABOVE a dark mass of storm-clouds, gathered in the western skies, peeps a brilliant ray from the declining sun, which penetrates far into the deepest recesses of a rocky gorge, hidden away in the mountain fastnesses of the Black Hills, where the iron heel of the pale-face has seldom trod beneath its rude step the velvet grass and wild flowers, and where the fertile valleys, mountain steeps, and level plains are sacred to the moccasined foot of the red-skin.

And yet, into that retreat of the red-man one pale-face has dared to intrude, for the ray of sunlight falls full upon the tall and sinewy form of a white man, clad in dressed buckskin, elaborately fringed and beaded, and with his bold, handsome features shaded beneath a broad felt hat, looped up upon the left side with a small pin, cut from the purest red coral, and exquisitely carved to represent a human hand, the fingers shut tight excepting the forefinger, which pointed straight out, as if directing the way to be pursued by the moccasined feet of the wearer.

It was a strangely handsome face upon which the sunlight fell, upon which dwelt a haunting shadow cast there by some dread sorrow of bygone years, and a sternness that proved a determination to suffer and be strong.

The skin was darkly bronzed by long exposure to sunshine, wind and storm, and a mass of gold-brown hair, wavy and rich in line, fell nearly down to his waist, while his face was beardless, excepting a mustache, and every feature was perfect, the eyes being particularly lustrous, and holding in their dark-blue depths a fascination that was irresistibly attractive.

Lying at the feet of the man was a hunter's knapsack, to which was strapped an oil-cloth, blanket and provision pouch, while in his belt were a brace of navy revolvers and a large hunting-knife with an ivory handle and double-edged blade.

As he thus stood there in the sunlight, his hunter's pack at his feet, and whole manner one of repose, he leant with both hands upon the muzzle of a rifle of a recent manufacture, for it carried, ready for instant use, sixteen leaden messengers of death to hurl upon a foe.

As the hands thus rested upon the rifle's muzzle, the right above the left, it was observable that the former was almost blood-red in hue.

Was the right hand of the hunter stained with blood, or was the skin never to be cleansed of its scarlet stain?

A closer inspection proved that the well-shaped hand, small but of iron grasp, was indelibly stamped with red from the wrist to the end of the shapely fingers.

Had the hunter thus alone in the Black Hills, been born with that blood-red hand?

Had some crime of bygone years brought that red curse upon him?

Or, had the hand been stained thus for some deadly deed it had done in the past?

Reader, let the sequel unfold to you the history of Red-Hand, the Scout.

CHAPTER II.

A DEADLY RECOGNITION.

As Red-Hand, the Scout, thus stood in the deep gorge of the mountains, with daylight dying around him, and the sunlight tinging up the bold and rugged scenery upon every hand, there suddenly came to his ears the sound of some object breaking through the thick underbrush that fringed the left of the gorge.

Was it some wild animal of the hills, in pursuit of smaller game, or a red-skin, almost equally as wild as the beasts of the forests?

Whether one or the other, it was a foe, the Scout well knew. Quickly his pack was slung upon his back, a bound carried him to the shelter of a tree near by, and the daring man stood at bay, ready to face whatever danger threatened him.

A louder rustling among the bushes, a parting of the leafy covert, and a large stag bounded out into the full view of the Scout, who raised his rifle as if about to fire, but quickly lowered it—as he suddenly beheld, directly behind the flying animal, another form that brought a flush of surprise to his face, for there stood before him one of his own race.

Bounding out into the clearing the stranger directly raised his rifle, glanced along its glittering barrel, and then came the flash and sharp report, the death-knell of the flying stag.



The Scout cut with his knife the name of the man he had slain and the date of his death.

Ere the rattling echoes of the rifle had died away far down the mountain gorge, there broke forth upon the air one long, loud, terrible cry of mingled joy and rage, and with a face as livid as the dead, Red-Hand, the Scout, bounded from behind his sheltering tree; his rifle fairly leaped to his shoulder, a bright burst of flame from the muzzle, a ringing report, and the hunter who had slain the stag threw up his arms, clutched wildly at the air, staggered forward, attempted to cry out, and with a groan fell dead upon the velvet grass, the life-blood streaming from a ragged wound in his broad breast.

With rapid strides the Scout advanced and stood over the prostrate form of the man he had slain, and into his face crept a look that was hard to fathom, for there dwelt there hatred, sorrow, triumph, and remorse, all mingled.

Though limp and stiffening with death, the form was of splendid proportions, and clad in a full suit of buckskin.

The head was sheltered by a soft felt hat, beneath which were clusters of dark curls clinging around the neck, while the face, pale and lifeless, was most striking in appearance and had doubtless once been exceedingly handsome.

By his side lay a Spencer rifle, and in his belt were revolvers and knife, none of which had served him when face to face with the man who had taken his life, and who stood for long moments regarding him, his face each moment growing more bitter and stern.

At length the lips of Red-Hand, the Scout, quivered slightly, parted, and he said, half aloud:

"At last we have met, Boyd Bernard; you and I!"

"Yes, met, here in the very heart of the

wilderness—how different from our last meeting, seven years ago.

"Yes, met! you to fall dead at my feet, and your soul hurled into the bottomless pit by my hand.

"Dead, Boyd Bernard! ay, dead you are, for my aim never fails, especially when the muzzle of my rifle covered your heart.

"A strange fate brought your footsteps hither! A strange destiny led me alone into these wilds where I believed the pale-face never came.

"Your fate led you to death! my destiny led me to avenge; but, oh, God! it is terrible to see you lie there, slain by my hand, Boyd Bernard, and for the sake of the olden time I will not leave you here to be torn limb from limb by wild beasts.

"No; I will bury you yonder beneath that sheltering tree, and the shrill winds that sweep through this gorge will be your only requiem—a grave in the wilderness your only tomb."

A moment longer the scout stood, silently and painfully musing, and then the night shadows creeping on, warned him to commence his work.

Unslung, from a loop behind his belt, a small but serviceable hatchet, he began to dig a grave in the soft earth beneath a sheltering tree.

An hour's work, and he had descended to a sufficient depth, and seeking the thicket, he cut a number of poles just the length of the grave.

Then the stiffened form was tenderly raised and laid in its earthly bed, the feet toward the rising sun, and above it the poles were placed and securely fastened, for the Scout knew that wild beasts would attempt to rob the grave of its human occupant.

Carefully and compactly the grave was filled, and then, in the smooth bark of the tree at its head, the Scout cut with his knife the name of the man he had slain and the date of his death.

It read:
"BOYD BERNARD,
BORN IN
Portsmouth, N. H., January 1st, 1838,
SLAIN IN
The Black Hills, July 10th, 1866."

As the Scout cut the last figure in the inscription, the darkness of night came upon the valley, while far above, on the eastward slope of the hills, was visible the rosy tinge of the departed sunshine, and upon the summit of the western mountains was the mellow light of the rising moon, tinged with silvery radiance the forest-clad scenery, grand in its gloom, desolation and deathlike silence.

CHAPTER III.

A STARTLING APPARITION.

HAVING completed his sad task, Red-Hand, the Scout, replaced his hatchet in its sling, shouldered his traps, and with a moan of bitter anguish crushed back through his shut teeth, started down the valley, with steps slow and uncertain, as if he hardly cared whither he went.

A walk of half a mile, and he came to a precipitous hillside, which suddenly brought him to a halt and recalled him to himself, for he glanced quickly around, and then said:

"Why, this is the way I came into the gorge—I am strangely moody to-night; and no wonder, when, two hours ago, my hand took the life of Boyd Bernard.

"Well, I must away from here, and—yes, I must again pass his grave.

"Oh! that I had been less quick in my shot, or less true in my aim, and then his lips would not have been forever sealed, and he could have told me of her; but I forgot—she is dead—ay, forever dead to me, even though she were living.

"And in what land lies her fair form which once I so loved to hold close to my heart?

"Did I know where was her grave, I would seek it even to the uttermost parts of the earth, for, guilty though she was, I loved her—yes, love her still—and above her last resting-place would gladly kneel.

"But he is dead, too, and my hand forever sealed his lips—Hark!"

As the Scout paused suddenly in his walk, there burst forth upon the crisp air the sound of a voice in song.

It was a beautiful, clear voice, but it sounded strangely weird-like there in that wild gorge, and, spell-bound, Red-Hand stood and listened as the echoes broke upon hillsides and swept on down the valley.

It was a woman's voice, and like one in a dream stood the Scout, as she trilled forth in rich tones a song unfamiliar to his ears, but

the words of which sunk deep into his heart, and clear and sweet rung the refrain:

"In dreams I sigh for love for me;
That ever lit with love for me;
But they are dead, their light is gone,
And sorrow's night shades gather fast,
As through the vale I'm borne along—
An autumn leaf upon the blast."

Like a startled fawn, Red-Hand, the Scout, stood in silence, and then his eyes became suddenly fixed upon a form that appeared upon a rocky shelf, overhanging the tree, beneath which was the new-made grave of Boyd Bernard.

Upon that shelf of rock suddenly appeared a slender form—a woman's, clad in a garb of white, and adorned her back hung heavy masses of golden hair.

The moon had risen above the eastern hills, and poured a full flood of light directly upon her, and distinctly Red-Hand beheld the beautiful, sad face, the large eyes glancing down into the gloom of the gorge beneath, as if to penetrate the dark secret buried there.

Then the song ceased, with the words, "An autumn leaf upon the blast," and the clear voice called out in tones that again startled the silent depths:

"Boyd! Boyd Bernard! Come!"
With a startled cry of fear, wrung from his brave heart, Red-Hand, the Scout, turned and dashed away at mad speed down the gloomy gorge, his starting eyes ever and anon turned behind him as he ran, as though expecting to see upon his path a pursuing phantom, a being of the other world.

With the speed of a deer he sped along, his teeth shut close, his hands fiercely clinching his rifle, his breath drawn quick and hard, and his whole being wrought up to a pitch of terrible excitement by what he had seen, the terrible apparition that had come upon him in that wild gorge of the Black Hills.

Thus miles were passed over, and yet, through the long hours of the lonely night, he pressed on, until the morning sun found him far away from the scene where had occurred the fatal recognition of Boyd Bernard, and where, as if in punishment for his deed of blood, had appeared before him a very phantom of the mountains.

CHAPTER IV.

AT THE GRAVE OF HIS Foe.

Five years have passed since Red-Hand, the Scout, fled in superstitious awe from the Black Hill country, leaving behind him a grave, to mark his footsteps through the wilderness, far beyond the confines of civilization.

Again the sunlight falls aslant the rocky gorge, as upon that afternoon, five years before, and the forest-clad hills are budding forth with the tender leaves of spring, and the birds trill merrily amid their emerald coverts.

Again the sunlight falls upon the form of a pale-faced hunter, who is standing beside the grave of Boyd Bernard, above which the green grass is growing, and the budding leaves of the insubstantial tree casting shadows.

The inscription yet remains, worn by the time that has gone by, and upon this the eye of the hunter sadly rests.

Though five years have passed they have left no trace of their footsteps upon the face of the Scout, excepting to make the features harder and sterner, for the man thus standing by the grave of Boyd Bernard is none other than Red-Hand, who had once fled precipitately from the spot, as if in very fear.

He is dressed pretty nearly as upon his former visit to the gorge, his black felt hat still looped up with the red coral hand, though his knife and revolver are of a newer pattern, and his rifle is one of Evans' improved repeaters, capable of firing thirty-five times without reloading.*

When, five years before, Red-Hand, the Scout, fled from the Black Hills, he believed he would never again profane its unknown fastnesses with his footsteps; but as time passed on and the eye of adventurers and hunters were turned toward the country now called the "Miners' New Eldorado," a small band of hardy men determined to penetrate into its unexplored depths, and seek there the golden fortunes said to lie buried beneath the rocky hills.

The guide of that brave band was Red-Hand, the Scout, for he was well-known along the frontier, and one of the most daring men on the border, and his skill in wood and prairie craft, and ability to outwit Indian cunning, had gained him a widespread reputation among the bold bordermen and the soldiers of the outposts.

Of Red-Hand little, if anything, was known regarding his real name, whence he came, or why he, a man of superior education and ability, had banished himself from the marts of civilization, and become an Indian-fighter and hunter upon the western border.

Five years before his first solitary pilgrimage into the Black Hills he had appeared upon the frontier, well armed and mounted, and possessed of considerable money, and his polite manner and ready generosity soon won for him many admirers, though no man among his companions could boast of being his intimate friend, or of any knowledge regarding him.

His blood-red right hand attracted attention, and yet but one man had dared to make jest regarding it, and he never repeated the offense, for he found the stranger not the one to trifle with.

At first the life on the plains seemed strange to Red-Hand, for by that name he now became known, and, as if to encourage it, or to hide his real name, he adorned his hat with the red coral hand; but he quickly learned the crafty ways of the Indian, could soon strike a trail and follow it across the prairies, became a dead shot with rifle and revolver, and a desperate hand with the knife, and, before two years' stay on the border, was noted as a scout and hunter of superior ability, and a man of undaunted courage.

When the band of hardy pioneers, seeking to discover if the Indian legends of gold in the Black Hills was true, set out upon their expedition, Red-Hand, the Scout, was selected as the guide, for it was known that, years before, he had made a solitary pilgrimage into the country.

Of that lonely scout Red-Hand never spoke, but his comrades believed he had discovered more than he would divulge.

What that discovery was the reader already knows; and yet, unable to resist the temptation to once again visit the wild scenes of the Black Hills, the Scout had accepted the position of guide, and shortly after the score of daring plaidmen started for the unknown land, thoroughly mounted and equipped in every particular, for complete defense and offense.

After long days of travel the hill-country

* The Evans Rifle is manufactured near Lewiston, Maine; contains thirty-five shots, and is one of the most complete and easily-handled guns ever made. It was invented in '70. Think—BUFFALO BILL.

was reached, and remembering a number of advantageous localities for a safe camp, Red-Hand conducted the party to one of the most favorable positions, and, after a short rest, set out alone to visit the gorge, several leagues above the encampment, where he left his companions, for an irresistible attraction lured him once more into the gorge, where was hidden the grave of Boyd Bernard.

CHAPTER V.

A TIMELY RESCUE.

FOR a long time did Red-Hand stand in silent bitterness at the grave of Boyd Bernard, his eyes cast down, and his two hands resting upon the muzzle of his rifle.

Across his stern face ever and anon swept a shadow of mingled sorrow and pain, as some haunting memory was recalled from the long-buried past.

At length, with a deep-drawn sigh, wrung from his inmost heart, the Scout slung his rifle across his shoulder and strode away, his eyes carefully scanning the ground, for around the grove were traces that showed other feet than his had lately been there.

Steadily following the trail, it led him, after a tramp of a mile, into a narrow gulch, where his ears were suddenly startled by the unexpected and ringing report of a rifle, followed by a series of wild yells, which he well knew to be the war-cry of the wild Sioux of the northern tribes.

Again a single shot followed, and feeling confident that some one of his comrades had left camp and met with a band of Indians, the Scout ran hastily forward, and turning a bend in the gulch beheld a sight that for the moment deprived him of action, so great was his surprise.

Upon a ledge of rock, and partially protected by a huge boulder, stood a young girl, scarcely more than sixteen years of age.

Her form was slightly above the medium height prescribed for beautiful women, and compact and graceful, while every motion indicated strength and agility.

A suit of buck-skin, with dressed skirt, and leggings elaborately embroidered, set off her figure, and a soft hat surmounted her head, and half hid braids of golden hair that were in lovely contrast to her large, black eyes and dark lashes and eyebrows.

The face was browned almost to the hue of an Indian's, and yet the pure blood of the white shone in every feature of her beautiful and daring face, for, though in deadly danger, the fair maiden stood her ground with fearless determination, her small rifle, evidently just discharged, clutched in both hands to beat back three painted Sioux warriors who were rapidly bounding up the steep hillside to the ledge where she stood.

Two more Indians lay further down the slope, one motionless in death, the other writhing in agony, for a stream of blood poured from a wound in his side.

That the maiden had been surprised by the Indians and had sought the ledge for safety was evident, and that her rifle had dropped, two of her enemies was also evident, while her powder flask and shot-pouch, attached to her belt, and lying half-way up the slope, proved that she had dropped her means of further defense.

This fact the three remaining warriors also discovered, and with wild yells they bounded on up the steep ascent, while their pale, but daring girl-foe stood her ground with clubbed rifle to meet them.

Such was the sight that greeted the eyes of Red-Hand, and his surprise for a moment kept him motionless.

But, another bound of the leading warrior carried him almost within reach of the clubbed rifle, and the uplifted tomahawk proved that the maiden must die unless the Scout acted quickly.

And Red-Hand did act quickly; his rifle-belt touched his shoulder, his red forefinger tripped the trigger, and the splendid weapon hurled forth its deadly pill; the Sioux sunk dead at the feet of the maiden he would have slain.

Ere the two startled comrades of the fallen brave could fly there followed two more quick reports from the Scout's rifle, and the two sunk dead in their tracks, while in utter surprise, and with astonishment upon every feature of her lovely face, the rescued maiden rapidly descended the slope, picking up her belt as she came, and stood before Red-Hand, her manner that of commingled timidity and fearlessness, while in a voice strangely melodious, she said:

"I knew not that the pale-face hunters dare come into this unknown land of the Indian!"
"And yet I find here a young girl, and one whom it seems can take care of herself," and Red-Hand pointed to the dead and wounded Sioux that had fallen by the maiden's rifle.

"Ah, no, I would not now be alive had it not been for your true aim, sir; and from my heart I thank you," and the maiden grasped the hand of the Scout, to the next instant dropping it with a half-cry of terror, as her eyes fell upon the red stain.

At her sudden action, Red-Hand's face flushed and then turned deadly pale; but, controlling any emotion he might feel, he replied:

"I am glad my footsteps led me here to serve you; but can I ask if you live in these hills?"
"My home is far away from here, sir. Are you alone?" and the maiden asked the last question almost in a whisper.

"No one is near us now; but I have comrades down the gorge, I am sure."

The face of the maiden wore a startled expression, and she seemed hesitating in her own mind as to the best course to pursue, and in silence the Scout gazed upon her.

At length she spoke, and her voice was firm.

"I am thankful to you for my life, sir, and there is one other that will bless you for it; but it couldn't be that you should meet—no, no, and I must away—"

"Hold, I beg you; you live here in this wild wilderness, you a mere child, and yet one whose language and address are not of the border, and yet you would leave me without one word of explanation?" said Red-Hand, with surprise.

"Yes, sir, though gladly would I have you seek the shelter of my home after what you have done for me, it must not be, for there is one other whom I must consult."

"One day, perhaps, we may meet again; now, we must part, and I beg you, as a true man, not to strike my trail and follow me."

"You furthermore increase my interest in you, fair girl; but it shall be as you wish, though things I knew not of are transpiring in this land, where I believed the feet of few pale-faces had ever trod."

"Yes, sir, now and then a white hunter has wandered into these wilds, and down the gorge a mile, is the grave of one who lost his life here, years ago."

Red-Hand started, and glancing searchingly into the maiden's face, while a strange expression flitted across his own, asked:

"How long have you known of that grave in the valley?"

"I first saw it three years ago—I was hunting in the valley, wounded a deer, and he fell near the tree; did you ever see the grave?"

"Yes, I passed it half an hour ago; you will not let me see your home, then?"
"No; your life might be the forfeit, and I would not have harm befall you. Farewell."

Without another word the maiden threw her rifle across her arm, gave a quick, earnest glance into the face of the Scout, and walked rapidly up the gulch to soon disappear behind a large boulder, while Red-Hand silently and in wonder gazed after her retreating form.

(To be continued.)

I CAN'T MAKE UP MY MIND.

BY O. H. R.

Oh, would I were a married man,
My house all full of glee;
A smiling partner by my side,
And children round my knee.
The cause why I'm a bachelor,
Not hard it is to find;
The fact is, that I really can't—
I can't make up my mind.

There's Juliana Lilywhite—
I know that she would drop
Into my loving arms, if I
Would but the question "pop;"
A rusty fussy body,
No difficulty find;
She would not hesitate, but I—
I can't make up my mind.

There's Angelina Marigold,
Who would with me elope;
If to her window I would fix
A ladder made of rope.
She's gentle and she's beautiful,
Her purse is richly lined;
And she'd have me spite of "pa," but I—
I can't make up my mind.

Now, when I walk along the street,
Girls' roguish looks I catch,
As with a sneer they say, "There goes
A rusty fussy body!"
Well, I'll resolve this very day
Some sort of wife to find;
I'll wed—I think I will—my dear,
I can't make up my mind.

FERGUS FEARNAGHT;
OR,
Our New York Boys.

A STORY OF THE BY-WAYS AND THOROUGHFARES.

BY GEORGE L. AIKEN,

AUTHOR OF "FALSE FACES," "ROY, THE RECKLESS," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN THE TOMBS.

THERE was a murmur among the boys at this proposal.

"Put down your knife, and fight it out fair," suggested Johnny Cregan.

But Mickey Shea had no idea of accepting Fergus' challenge. As he had intimated, he had long cherished a grudge against him, and he was thirsting for revenge. He waited, however, to have the rest of the band make common cause against Fergus, for he still stood in fear of him, even with the knife in his hand.

"He hain't got no business 'round here," he cried. "He ain't one of us, and he only came here to steal our money."

This was more than Fergus' hot blood could stand.

"I'll steal you!" he shouted, and made a sudden dash at Mickey Shea.

The suddenness of this attack took Mickey by surprise, for he did not think Fergus would dare to attack him with the knife in his hand.

He made a futile slash at Fergus with the knife, but the Fearnaght put the blow aside with his left arm and shot out his right, planting his fist between Mickey's eyes with such good-will that the young rascal was sent literally "heels over head," for he went down on his back with a resounding thump, and his legs went up, and he rolled over like a ball, and then lay sprawling on his face, howling dismally.

The knife was thrown from his hand by the violence of his fall. Billy Googan instantly grasped it.

"He's kilt Micky; go for him, boys!" he shouted.

But he found himself gone for, with a celerity that was more surprising than pleasant, for Fergus sprung upon him with a panther-like bound, wrenched the knife from his hand before he could use it, and as Billy twisted away from him, administered a resounding kick upon the rear part of his person, which just then was brought prominently forward.

"Now, I'll fix some of you!" shouted Fergus, flourishing the knife; but this was done merely to frighten the boys, for he had no idea of using it.

The fray was interrupted in an unexpected manner.

"Cheese it! here's a cop!" cried Dicky Long, shrilly.

Fergus found himself grasped roughly by the shoulder, and the knife was knocked out of his hand by the blow of a club which did not spare his knuckles.

"I've got you, you young devilkin!" exclaimed a voice; and Fergus speedily discovered that it belonged to a brawny policeman.

The young thieves, at the warning cry, adopted their usual tactics, darting to the string-pieces of the pier, plunging over into the water, and then, swimming between the spiles, disappeared, like so many scared wharf-rats.

Fergus and the policeman were left alone on the pier.

"Oh-h!" cried Fergus, as his knuckles smarted from the sharp rap of the policeman's club.

"You needn't knock my hand off!"

"I'll knock your head off, if I see fit," returned the policeman, gruffly.

"You'll see fits if you try it!" exclaimed Fergus, fiercely.

The policeman shook him up vigorously, and with a grim kind of satisfaction.

"Do you want a good clubbing, you imp of the devil?" he inquired, and with an exhibition of facetiousness, as if he was pleased with the boy's spirit while he reproved it.

"No, I don't," replied Fergus; but he ceased to struggle, convinced of the folly of resistance to strength so much superior to his own.

"Why don't you take a fellow of your own size?"

"Ho, ho! You find I've got a taking way with me, do you?" cried the policeman, with a chuckle.

"Altogether too taking," responded Fergus. "I wish you'd take your hands off me."

"Never a take, my young limb of Satan! I must take you in. I've been watching your crowd for some time, and you're the first one I've been able to lay my hands on. We'll have to make an example of you. So, pick up your knife and come along."

"It isn't my knife."

"Who's is it?" questioned the policeman;

his manner implying that he thought Fergus had uttered an untruth.

"Micky Shea's."

"Who's he—one of the gang?"

"Yes."

"How did you come by it?"

"I took it from Billy Googan, who was going to stick me with it!"

The policeman laughed.

"Pity he hadn't stuck two or three of you," he said; "it would have saved the city the expense of hanging you one of these days. Pick up the knife, anyway; no nonsense, mind! If you try any shenanigan on me I'll club you within an inch of your life."

He still retained his grasp on Fergus as he stooped to pick up the knife.

"Now shut up the blade."

Fergus did so, and the policeman took it from him and put it in his pocket.

"That's right," he said; "just you keep docile. It'll make things easier for you. Come along, now."

"What for? I ain't done anything—I don't belong to that thieving gang!"

The policeman shook his head in an incredulous manner.

"Tell that to the marines!" he rejoined. "You can't play that on me—it's too thin! I've been twiggung your crowd for some time, and I saw you thiek enough with the others before you got into the fight."

Fergus could not deny this. He was beginning to experience the evil result of keeping bad company.

"They said I stole their money," he said, doggedly.

"Just as like as not you did. That's the kind of crowd you are; when you can't steal from anybody else you steal from yourselves just to keep your hands in."

The policeman led Fergus along, the boy submitting doggedly. Indeed he was rather bewildered by finding himself a prisoner under such circumstances; but, knowing his own innocence he did not imagine that any punishment awaited him.

He was yet to learn how justice is administered in the great metropolis of the New World.

It has long been a belief among people of an average intellect that the net of law has been so ingeniously constructed that the great rascals can break through it, but the little ones are firmly held. This belief rests upon a broad foundation of truth. There is a Law for the Rich Man and a Law for the Poor Man, and they are both faithfully administered.

The Law Code is so skillfully constructed that justice is entirely lost sight of. In the olden time she used to be personified by a female figure, with her eyes blindfolded, and holding a pair of scales in one hand and a drawn sword in the other; but now the bandage has been altogether dispensed with, and the sword lies rusting in the attic of the court; the scales, however, are still retained to weigh the lawyers' fees.

In fact, about all there is left to Justice nowadays, is, to decide how much the opposing lawyers shall be paid; consequently there is a great deal more of Law than Justice in the land.

And Fergus, for the first time in his life, was in the clutches of that grim tyrant, the Law.

He was taken to the Mulberry street station and placed among a herd of the erring and the depraved, the scum of society—the "dangerous classes," as they have been called. Here the young beginners and the hardened, crime-seasoned reprobates were locked up together.

Adversity makes strange bed-fellows," is an old saying, and a true one, as Fergus discovered on that eventful night of his life.

A horrid din and baffle were kept up through the night, by three intoxicated prisoners, and he found it impossible to sleep.

He hailed the approach of morning with delight, looking for a speedy release. He was marched to the Tombs with the others. Justice Nixlaw was on the bench, a short, fat man, with a consequential look, and a high opinion of his own merits, and the celerity with which he disposed of the cases, and meted out "thirty days—two months—three months—a year," fairly took away Fergus' breath.

His turn came in due course, and he was led before the Justice, by the policeman who had arrested him.

The Justice knitted his brows and frowned at Fergus in a portentous manner.

"Hah! who's this?" he inquired. "A young reprobate?"

Fergus fired up at this.

"I ain't a reprobate!" he cried.

"Hah! of course not. I don't suppose you would admit it—you never do," he said, sarcastically. "Who arrested him?"

"I did," answered the officer.

"On what charge? What's he been doing?"

The policeman related the circumstance that led him to arrest Fergus.

"Here's a young scamp!" cried the Justice, with an oracular shake of the head. "One of those young thieves—fighting, with a knife in his hand. You make a good beginning, young man."

"I ain't begun yet," remonstrated Fergus. "I'm not a thief. I don't belong to the gang; I was only down there swimming—"

"That's against the city ordinance," interrupted the Justice, sternly.

"Well, a feller oughter have a chance to wash himself in this warm weather," rejoined Fergus, doggedly.

The Justice shook his head again in his portentous fashion.

"I shall have to send you up," he said.

"I don't want to go up; I ain't done nothing wrong!" cried Fergus.

"Do you think he's one of those young thieves?" the Justice inquired of the policeman.

"I have no doubt of it," replied that officer.

"Probably the ringleader?"

"I shouldn't be surprised."

"What have you got ag'in me?" demanded Fergus, surprised by this testimony.

"Silence!" roared the Justice. "You are here to answer questions, not to ask them. What's your name?"

"Fergus Fearnaght."

"Ah, yes; I might have known it would be something like that. Fearnaght! Donaght, more likely. What does your father do?"

"Ain't got any."

"Your mother's a widow, eh? Ah, yes; let's of that kind of widow in the city."

"I haven't got any mother."

"No mother nor father?"

"No," answered Fergus, tremulously.

"Hah! never had any, perhaps, eh?"

He paused here and smiled grimly, and the attendant policemen chuckled audibly at the joke, as they were in duty bound to do.

"Where do you live?" he continued.

"In Baxter street."

"Ah, yes; nice neighborhood that! What do you do for a living?"

"I do jobs, when I can get 'em."

"And steal when you can't! Oh, yes; it's thirty days for you. Take him away."

"Thirty days!" exclaimed Fergus, in dismay. "Thirty days! when I ain't done nothing, you old pudding-head!"

"Hah! what's that?" cried the Justice, wrathfully. "Pudding-head, eh? That's thirty days more!"

The policeman dragged Fergus away, whispering in his ear:

"Hold your tongue, you fool, or you'll get six months!"

Fergus felt a choking sensation in his throat, and he was so enraged that the blood seemed to fairly hiss through his veins, and he would have undoubtedly assaulted the Justice on the bench if he could have got at him; but the policeman, used to such scenes, knew what was passing in his mind, and hurried him out of the court-room.

He took him across the "Bridge of Sighs," as it is called, in imitation of that historical one in Venice, and left him in the lower corridor to wait for the "

FAME.

BY EDEN E. REXFORD.
Author of "Silver Threads Among the Gold."

Once I knew an aged poet,
Old with work and want and care,
And the fame he sighed and toiled for
Never came to make life fair.
And his heart grew starved and hungry
As the hearts of mortals can,
For some sign of approbation
From his selfish fellow-man.

And he died, but when he slumbered,
Caring nothing more for fame,
All the world began to echo
With the poor old poet's name,
And they built a tomb of marble
His low resting-place above,
Shutting out the rain and sunshine
And the flowers poets love.

Yesterday, as I was going
Slowly down the crowded street
More than once I heard some children
A sweet verse of his repeat.
And I wondered which were truest
Tribute to the poet dead?
Stately tomb of heart-cold marble
Or the words the children said?

The Men of '76.

Benedict Arnold.

BY DR. LOUIS LEGRAND.

THE associate of brave men in the early years of the Revolutionary struggle, and made glorious by many a deed of daring, all were suddenly eclipsed by an act so infamous that to all time Benedict Arnold will be the term to imply the utmost depth of perfidy and treachery.

With a sense of loathing the American recalls the memory of the man; yet of all the men of '76 his life-record stands pre-eminent for its moral—the awful penalty which is sure to visit him who betrays his country. Vast indeed must have been the crime, stupendous the fall, when Washington had to say:

"Arnold's conduct is so villainously perfidious that there are no terms that can describe the baseness of his heart."

And when he had to add:

"The confidence and folly which have marked the subsequent career of this man are of a piece with his villainy, and all three are perfect in their kind."

He expressed what time has fully confirmed; and to-day it may be said that history furnishes no nearer parallel to Lucifer's fall than Arnold's treason brought upon himself.

Benedict Arnold was born in Norwich, Conn., January 3d, 1740. Even in early youth he betrayed the man. He was cruel. He would rob birds' nests, and tear the young birds in pieces to enjoy the cries of the old birds. He would strew finely-powdered glass and the broken visals from the drug store, in which he was early an apprentice, on the ground and in the grass where the barefooted school children played, to enjoy their suffering and terror at their bleeding feet. He would flog and fight other boys for the mere enjoyment of fighting. He participated in any and every rash escape or adventure which the ingenuity of a fertile genius for mischief could invent. He appeared to know no fear, and the stories related of his feats and exploits savor of the marvelous.

Coming to young manhood he went to sea, and engaging in a half-contraband trade with the West India islands, he found the excitement of that adventurous life quite to his taste. He fought a duel in one island—he almost killed a sailor in a brawl, in another island—he traded, trafficked, and roved around the seas like a reckless spirit, who, had piracy been possible, would have been a rival of Morgan and Lafitte.

This restless spirit was among the first to answer the call to arms. The crack of musketry at Concord was music to his ears, and, as the wild excitement grew, it drew to the front the belligerent Benedict Arnold, who, ready for the most dangerous service, was commissioned a Colonel of Militia, and given command of Connecticut troops dispatched to capture Ticonderoga. He hastened forward, at the head of a regiment of wild spirits, to find Ethan Allen with his Green Mountain boys there before him, but, after a bitter quarrel with the daring Vermonters, he participated equally in the assault upon the noted fortress (May 10th, 1775), and after its capture pursued the enemy on the lake (Champlain) with such tireless activity that that whole region, for a season, was awed into submission to the patriot cause.

But trouble followed. Between the rough, but honest Ethan Allen, and the utterly reckless, irreligious and unprincipled Arnold there was no harmony, and it ended in the withdrawal of the latter from his command, and he proceeded to Cambridge, where Washington's headquarters then were, and sought for service. Just such a spirit as Arnold was wanted. The conquest of Canada having been conceived, now that Ticonderoga was wrested from the English, involved the capture of Quebec, by the dispatch, through the woods of Maine, of one column, to be joined, before that famous stronghold, by a second column, which should first capture Montreal, and then drop down to the Canadian capital, to conjoin forces and carry Quebec by storm. Arnold was the very man, apparently, for the work, and to him was given the Maine movement, while the brave Montgomery led the corps against Montreal.

The story of that expedition up the Kennebec and then through the wild forest, in the inclement fall of 1775, is hardly possible for pen to narrate. So much suffering, so many obstacles to overcome, so much to discourage and break down the men, it seems incredible it was ever undertaken, and incredible that five hundred out of eleven hundred should have continued on, to appear before the astounded people and troops of Quebec late in November.

Montgomery came down from above and joined Arnold, and on the last day of the year, at night, the assault was made, which ended in Montgomery's death and Arnold's defeat after desperate valor and a severe wound. With a remnant of his troops he remained to maintain the siege of Quebec, until May, 1776, when he was superseded in command by General Brown, by whom the conquest of Canada was suddenly abandoned May 15th.

Arnold, for three years after, made a brilliant record of field service, but all was clouded by his personal unpopularity. Turbulently fierce in anger, insolent, with bad principles, and integrity that none trusted, his most splendid deeds scarcely sufficed to make him respected. With superiors he was jealous, captious, quarrelsome; to inferiors dogmatic, insolent, cruel. But the service so needed his unconquerable will, his matchless courage, his readiness for any enterprise, that he was given important command.

On Lake Champlain, in the summer of 1776, he had a series of water conflicts, than which

nothing in our naval warfare is more remarkable for personal prowess. Says a historian:

"The admirers of Arnold have a right to refer with pleasure to that bright period of his life which dates from the evacuation of Canada, in 1776, to the battle of Bemus Heights, in October, 1777. It was crowded with exploits of romantic courage—some of them so desperately daring as to justify a doubt whether, in the excitement of the battlefield, Arnold was a sane man. This was eminently the case in his final exploit at Saratoga."

That "final exploit" was at the second day's battle. He rushed to the very front of the charging columns, right between the two fires, where his escape from death was a marvel. He escaped with a wound in the leg which lamed him for life, and Congress, which had been very slow to advance him, owing to its distrust of his personal character, came forward with its admission of merit by voting him the commission of Major-General, dating from Burgoyne's surrender, to which he so signally contributed.

From that time he saw no service, until placed in command in Philadelphia, upon its evacuation by the British, June 17th, 1778. He had married, a short time previous, Margaret Shippen, daughter of a noted disloyal physician of the Quaker City, and, having powerful influence brought to bear, had the city given into his keeping.

It was a most important assignment, and his rascality in promoting his own pecuniary interests was soon aggravated by his affiliating with an anti-republican faction to an extent which made him very offensive to every good patriot—so offensive that finally he was brought to trial, and in the fall of 1778, was deprived of his command and stigmatized by the public voice, if not by the court-martial which adjudged to a "reprimand," as an unworthy and dishonorable public servant.

Furious and insolent, he hurled anathema and curse upon men in high and low places. His extravagance in living had deeply involved him in debt, and he was reduced to the verge of distraction. No employ which the government could give could extricate him from his embarrassment; and then was conceived the terrible and wholly infamous scheme of selling himself to the enemy of his country.

A correspondence was opened with Major Andre, a member of Sir Henry Clinton's staff and an old acquaintance of the Shippen family. A refugee minister, named Odell, acted as the medium of communication. Slowly the two correspondents, under guise of a commercial transaction, unfolded the scheme and discussed the terms. Clinton, cognizant of all that passed, did not admit Arnold's money value, but suggested that, if the American general would secure to him some valuable post, then a price could be fixed.

This culminated in Arnold's efforts to get possession of West Point, and so powerfully did his few friends, in and out of Congress, work, that (August 3d, 1780) Washington assigned him to the command of the West Point and surrounding garrisons.

Then the work of treason rapidly developed, and finally Arnold appointed Sept. 20th for an interview with Andre and Col. Beverly Robinson, to consummate the arrangements by an interview on board a British sloop of war, lying in the Hudson, off Dobb's Ferry. But Arnold did not venture to visit the vessel, and that night sent his messengers to the sloop of war, with directions for Andre to meet him ashore. This Andre did, and the conspirators held a long interview in the dense underwood at the foot of Clove Mountain, on the west side of the Hudson.

So protracted was this conference that daylight compelled the boatmen to withdraw, and Andre was taken to the house of Joshua H. Smith, Arnold's confidant and messenger to the sloop of war. Andre and Arnold remained at Smith's house during all the day of the 20th Sept.

Annoyed by the shore guns, the sloop of war had to drop down stream, and this compelled Andre to proceed to New York by land. Smith bore him across the river to Verplanck's Point, and from thence, protected by a pass from Arnold, "Mr. John Anderson" started for New York.

How he was arrested on the 23d, by three Americans, near Tarrytown—how in his stockings were found all the papers which laid bare the whole astounding scheme—how Arnold was apprised of this arrest when entertaining Washington's aids at breakfast, while Washington was expected every moment—how the traitor, excusing himself from his guests, went down to the river, and calling his barge, pulled off down to the British sloop of war, and then escaped—how Washington and his generals, now apprised of the monstrous plot, by prompt action saved the posts from any surprise or betrayal—how Andre was tried and condemned, and was executed Oct. 2d, 1780, as a spy, although Clinton made every effort to save him, and Arnold also interposed by himself assuming all the responsibility of the spy's acts—those exciting and momentous acts form a long chapter in American history, which few can peruse without a sense of pity, pain and admiration for the gallant Andre, and of execration for the monster-villain whose treachery came so very near to success.

Arnold's after career was consistent with his wholly unprincipled character. He first issued an "Address" to the people of America, justifying his perfidious course by avowing the king of Great Britain to be the righteous authority, etc. This address, especially designed to foment insurrection among the American troops, was accompanied by a proclamation of Clinton, inviting desertion and abandonment of the patriot cause; but both were received with scorn and execration.

The traitor, as the price of his villainy, was to receive thirty thousand pounds sterling, in money, and the commission of brigadier-general in the British army. Acting under this commission, he led expeditionary corps into Virginia and Connecticut, burning and devastating as he passed. The town of New London, in his own native State, he reduced to ashes. Clinton abhorred such war, and the whole British army so detested the man for his treason, that he soon was virtually retired from the service, and the world knew no more of him as an officer.

As a man, he everywhere was treated with aversion or downright insult, and was literally driven, by the force of public opinion, to abandon England. He lived for awhile in Nova Scotia; thence, trading with the West Indies, he was captured by the French, but escaped, and again returned to England—leading a very retired life, and dying at Gloucester Place, in London, June 14th, 1801.

An old preacher, who had several calls to take a parish, asked his servant where he should go, and the servant said: "Go where there is most sin, sir." The preacher concluded that was good advice, and went where there was most money.

A True Knight:
OR,
TRUST HER NOT.

BY MARGARET LEICESTER.

CHAPTER V.

A MAN'S FATE.

THE burial of Mrs. Stanley was over now; she was lying quiet in the cold mausoleum at Greenwood, with the sun or the snow drifting in through the gilded bars, a cold house for a heart that had always beat warmly to every kind and tender emotion until now!

The house she had left had got back its old looks, now that her cold presence was out of it; the crape was off the door-handle, the blinds were drawn up, the footsteps of the inmates were no longer hushed, nor their voices subdued.

Her interment had been a magnificent pageant; long and glittering was the line of carriages which had followed her to her tomb; distinguished had been the assembly, and many a notable name was inscribed in the roll of mourners, for Paul Stanley was a celebrated beauty, and his wife had been a fashionable beauty. Some humbler mourners, too, fringed the outside of the illustrious throng, stretching their gaunt necks and straining their hollow eyes to get a glimpse of the velvet-draped casket which contained her who had, many a time, spoken sweet words to them, and done kind acts for them, which were inscribed on their forlorn hearts in letters never fading.

The bereaved husband performed his part in the ceremonial with great grace and propriety; he was noticeably pale; sunk in profound grief, and never once lifted his eyes or seemed to be aware of the presence of any one around him.

"Perfectly stunned, poor fellow!" said his friends, as they sauntered back to their usual avocations. "It must be a frightful thing for a man of his exquisite sensibilities to realize that he actually was the cause of her death. Heaven have mercy on us! I shouldn't wonder if he should turn melancholy mad!"

The object of their compassion returned from the funeral of his wife, and threw himself in his easy-chair beside his study fire. The color had not returned to his tawny cheek, and from time to time he shivered involuntarily and looked uneasily around him, as if he felt some evil presence in the room.

"Well, well; she's gone," at last said he, rising and taking a cigar from its case, "and an eternity of regrets will never bring her back. I believe she loved me to the end, too," he said, half groaning. "Oh, Rosa! Rosa! Rosa!"

He flung down the cigar, and going to a little ebony and silver cabinet, brought forth a decanter of brandy, and was about to mix himself a tumbler of it, when a grizzly thought assailed him, and he set it down hastily, and turned away with his hand to his eyes, faltering:

"If I hadn't been too fond of this and the like of this, I would never have committed that fatal blunder. I've half a mind to think this out seriously." He sat down with his head between his hands, and so remained, moody and motionless, until a servant, opening the door, ushered in a gentleman, announcing him as Mr. Falcon, solicitor.

Stanley started as his eye fell on the stranger—a smooth, pale, obsequious little man, with a bland but wrinkled smile, and an ever-ready bow; but he recovered himself instantly, and rose with a civil though distant salutation.

"Take a chair, Mr. Falcon," said he, waving him into one opposite his own; "you will find me anything but good company, I fear."

"I should not have intruded, sir," said Mr. Falcon, with a bow, while the piercing gray eyes fixed themselves upon the face of his host like burning-glasses, "but I have business to perform—business connected with your late wife's property."

Stanley returned his look steadily, but made no reply beyond a slight inclination.

"Six weeks ago," continued Mr. Falcon, "I had the honor of drawing up the late Mrs. Stanley's will. He paused, with the usual smile and bow, while Stanley gazed at him with hardening eye, and the dark blood mounting to his forehead.

"This is all new to me, Mr. Falcon," said he, grimly. "You certainly astonish me."

Mr. Falcon made no reply to that, save customary obeisance, but went on in a professionally subdued tone:

"Mrs. Stanley, on that occasion, did me the honor of showing me where she intended to keep her will, and of requesting me to seal the said receptacle immediately upon my knowledge of her decease—sudden or otherwise—which order I took the liberty of obeying, the morning subsequent to that event."

Stanley rose in great agitation and paced about the room, striving in vain to conceal his perturbation.

"A will! Bless my soul, what does all this mean?" he cried, in a burst of mortification. "To whom, or what, may I ask, did she will her property?"

"With Mr. Stanley's permission," said Mr. Falcon, with a series of deferential little smiles, and propitiatory little bows, "I shall now summon the household, bring the document, and, in their presence, inform you. There is one person who has a right to be present—whom I have taken the liberty of bringing along with me—Mr. George Laurie by name."

Stanley turned upon him as if he had struck him a blow, and frowning blackly, ejaculated: "George Laurie! what in the name of wonder has he to do with this matter?"

"With your permission, again," smiled Mr. Falcon, bowing himself to the door, "I shall now introduce him; he is waiting just at hand, and the will shall explain all."

He opened the door, no wider than was necessary, however, and slipped out, closing it noiselessly behind him. In a very few moments he returned, bearing in his hands Mrs. Stanley's writing-desk—a pretty little thing of ebony, inlaid with amber—and with a most reverential air, laid it upon the poet's writing-table. He then stood aside, and revealed behind him, George Laurie, looking very frigid and resolute.

With the slightest possible salutation, Stanley did the *devoirs* to his guest by waving him to a distant chair, and continued himself to pace about the room, with the scowl ever darkening on his brow, until several of the servants filed in, in answer to Mr. Falcon's summons, he reading out the names of those whose presence was desired, from a slip of paper which he held in his hand.

"Now, if you please," said he, when all were seated, and drawing the desk toward him, he expeditiously removed one seal from the little drawer which contained the key, and another seal from the lock; then, inserting the key, looked round with a cunning twinkle in his eye.

Stanley stood at his elbow, looking on with devouring interest.

"Mr. Laurie," said Mr. Falcon, in his smoothest, most deferential tone, "be good enough to draw your chair close to the table; there are portions of this document which it is unnecessary for any one to hear except Mr. Stanley and yourself."

A visible tremor ran through Stanley from head to foot; he bit his lip fiercely, but he took no heed of the young man, as he slowly and reluctantly obeyed the lawyer's invitation and sat down close to the little desk.

Mr. Falcon turned the key, opened the desk, removed from it the loose papers, and finding the spring of a secret drawer, pulled it out.

All three, looking in at once, uttered a simultaneous exclamation.

The secret drawer was empty! A flash of triumph broke from Stanley's eyes; utter astonishment sat on George's face; but the lawyer turned scarlet with mortification—then, white with wrath.

"Foul play!" cried he, in a voice that rung through the room, and startled everybody to their feet like the report of a pistol. "Foul play, I say! The will is stolen!"

Stanley turned upon him with a look which might have scorched him up.

"Sir, you exceed your office," said he.

That cool, crushing tone of superiority brought Mr. Falcon's wits back to him. In a moment he was his own man again, executing his most deprecating bow and smile.

"My dear sir, you are right," said he; "let us stick to business. The will was here; it must be here still; we may find it among these papers."

In a twinkling he had turned them all over and examined the desk inside and outside, and was turning his piercing eyes from face to face, ending at last with George Laurie. He looked at him full two minutes without winking, and Stanley, observing his intense scrutiny, fastened his burning eyes also upon him.

George returned Mr. Falcon's gaze steadily, but by his changing and hardening expression it was plain that he did not feel at ease under it.

Having satisfied himself on this point, Mr. Falcon suddenly dismissed the servants, and, following the last of them to the door, watched them out of sight, closed it carefully, and returned to the gentlemen who stood together, but not looking at each other, at the desk.

"Mr. Laurie," said the lawyer, "you know something of this matter; it is useless to conceal it, and if I may be allowed to advise, your most prudent course is candor."

"Gentlemen," said George, looking at them both with unflinching eyes, "I do know something about this will, but not of its disappearance."

"What do you know?" demanded Mr. Falcon.

"I knew that Mrs. Stanley intended to make her will, and then I knew that she had made it."

"You knew!" ejaculated Stanley under his breath. The same ungovernable thrill seemed to run through him as he spoke, and, for the moment, he seemed almost demoniac as he stood there, trying to smother his fury.

"Are you aware of the contents of that will?" inquired Mr. Falcon, taking constant heed of both, but preserving his calmest, most insinuating manner.

George turned away hastily, saying, in a low voice:

"Be kind enough to excuse me answering that question. I can't answer it."

"Why can't you answer it, sir?" demanded Stanley, in a voice almost as low, but so fraught with fury and menace that the lawyer turned more heedfully toward him.

"It is nothing to the purpose whether I know or do not know the contents of the will," said George, turning to him a pale and anxious face.

"It was the result of a mere accident that Mrs. Stanley ever mentioned to me that she intended to make her will, and, if you please, I would rather not pursue the subject further, at least until you have answered me one question. Did Mrs. Stanley make any special statement to you on the night of her death?"

Stanley whitened to the lips.

"I know," answered he, still in that low, vibrating voice of chained-up fury, "I know that she and you had agreed between you that some statement was to be made to me."

He paused, malignantly waiting for George to offer some assent or dissent to this; but George moved not a muscle.

"I know this," reiterated Stanley, with a little bitter laugh, "because she told me so."

"Did she make the statement?" inquired George, with intense excitement.

"She did not," replied Stanley, between his teeth; "she left it, I presume, for you to make."

George again turned hastily aside, almost overcome by the revulsion of feeling. This man, wicked of heart and wild of life, must be innocent, then, of the dastardly crime he had laid to his charge! Mrs. Stanley had died with her secret locked in her own bosom, and her death had been caused by a mistake.

The icy tones of Stanley recalled him to himself.

"If Mr. Falcon will step into the next room for a few minutes, perhaps my young friend may be induced to give me his confidence."

"He need not go," said George, firmly; "I have nothing to say—no confidence to give, because I never had anything to do with Mrs. Stanley's affairs; at least, I became aware of some of them accidentally; but she never empowered me to act for her in any way. This is all I can or will say on this subject, Mr. Stanley."

"You absolutely refuse to impart to me the knowledge you have of my late wife's affairs?" said Mr. Stanley, almost in a whisper.

"I am obliged absolutely to refuse," returned George.

"Very good, sir," said Paul Stanley, stepping back with clenched hands, while a blaze of frantic hatred lit his eyes; "you've said all that is necessary. I understand our relative positions. Henceforward, if you are not as rash as you are impertinent, you will keep out of my way!"

George started as if stung, and cresting his handsome head, gazed at his adversary in burning anger.

"Gentlemen! gentlemen!" said the soft, smooth voice of Mr. Falcon, as he stepped between them with a little bow and smile, "this is all nonsense; let us go back to business. Mr. Stanley, will you be good enough to assist me in a thorough search through the late Mrs. Stanley's effects for the missing document?"

While he was speaking, George, with a slight bow, left the room, and a few minutes after the house, crossing its threshold for the last time.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FACE AT THE CRAG.

SIX months have passed—the scene is changed.

We now bid you look upon a glittering seaboard in one of the Northern States, where the hoary-headed Atlantic billows march in upon

the golden sand in endless phalanxes; where a black reef runs out half across the bay, sending high the curdled foam in rainbow spray, where a snow-white hamlet nestles in a green rent between two flower-hashed mountains, and all along the sandy shore rugged cliffs are piled mass on mass, and perforated with innumerable tiny caves, into and out of which the seabirds flutter, chattering.

Stormcliff!

Fitting name, indeed, when the storm-cloud darkens the summer sky; when lightnings play across that polished sea, and around these jagged rocks; when the foam-flecked breakers rush across the level floor, dashing far up the adamant wall; and the hamlet is hidden by the driving sea; but when the sea lies calm and smiling in the radiant sunlight, when the long sand reach is strewn with shining shells, and the little azure pool at the foot of the cliff are alive with darting minnows, and gammed with opal-tinted sunfish; when the scent of roses comes down from the rose-crowned crag, and the bells of the sheep in yonder velvet-green valley tinkle softly to the muffled roar of the slumbering ocean, you would laugh at the boding name for such a halcyon spot.

They are all here—Mr. Verne, Maiblume, Mademoiselle, George and Mr. Stanley. They have retired from the vortex of summer fashion to this quietest of nooks, and have here lived for months, secluded.

The author is a hard student, and works best in solitary places; the poet also loves loneliness and the sea, and finds his late affliction cheered by the presence of his friend Verne; thus they come to be here, which is the reason for all the rest being here, too.

Maiblume never will leave her father for the gay summer resorts; Coila is her sister and goes where she goes; and George Laurie is as indispensable an adjunct as the author's head—for he is his hand.

The Vernes have taken a little cottage standing by itself apart from all other cottages; nestling under the shadow of a vine-clad hill and half hidden by the waving foliage of shrub and tree and tangled creeper which lovingly crowd round it. A baby brook runs babbling out of the shrubbery hard by and winds in and out, through all the cottage grounds, like a blessing through a beautiful life, gladdening the heart at every turn with its freshening influence.

By its velvet banks would Maiblume and Coila wander half the summer day, reading or sketching till, in the cool of the evening, the gentlemen would join them, when they would all repair to the sea beach.

Stanley boards in the hamlet but spends almost all his leisure time with his friends.

His wife's will never having been discovered, he had in due time been put in possession of her property.

It was a delicious August afternoon, about five o'clock. The two young ladies were waiting at a rustic gate for the approach of the gentlemen, always considered due at that hour.

Maiblume, in her robes of tender green, clasped about the dainty waist with silver, looked like some stately maid of olden time, awaiting in greenwood glade her steel-clad knight to come through the wavering leaves and shadows to kneel in homage at her feet; while Coila, in her filmy clouds of white, with her black hair raining down, and a long, green fern-leaf in her tiny hand, looked like a fairy changing, listening for the elfin horn to recall her to that brighter land.

"They are coming," said Coila, as a cheery whistle echoed through the leafy wood, and she lightly sprung to the top of a moss-grown urn to see further along the winding pathway.

"Here come Monsieur the papa and Monsieur the poet, arm in arm; these two, how they agree together. My heart! neither of them should ever have married."

Maiblume laughed indifferently.

"I am glad to see Mr. Stanley getting over his trouble at last," observed she; "he is almost like his former self again."

Coila sat down on the top of the urn with her little bronze slippers on its pedestal.

"Monsieur the poet should marry again," said she, gayly. "Ah, how I should like to be the wife of a clever man! Should you not?"

"I don't know," said Maiblume, absently, and bending over the rude gate she plucked a pink wild rose from outside, touched it with her lips and fastened it in her bosom.

"Ah! Here comes Monsieur George!" exclaimed Coila, waving her fern-leaf joyously—"dear, kind, good Monsieur George!"

Maiblume looked out to the shining sea and her eyes seemed larger and more dewy while the rose on her bosom trembled with the quick pulses of her heart.

"After all I would rather be Monsieur George's wife than Monsieur Stanley's," resumed Coila, eyeing the advancing gentlemen, with babyish simplicity; "Monsieur Stanley is clever, but—bah! he has not the good heart of Monsieur George. Which should you prefer, Maiblume, my dear?"

Maiblume shrugged her shoulders, saying a little coldly:

"Nonsense!"

And Coila burst into a silver rill of laughter.

"Oh, I know already!" cried she, "and so does the fern-leaf. Which does she prefer, Monsieur Stanley or Monsieur George—head or heart?" and here she began plucking the fern-stalk bare, frond by frond, while the gentlemen rapidly approached and Maiblume's cheeks flushed crimson—"head or heart—head or heart," whispered the little witch, while her eyes gleamed with mischief.

"Oh *ma chère*, here it is—just as I knew—heart!"

Gentlemen, Maiblume says she prefers marrying heart to marrying head. Is she not right, dear Monsieur Verne?" and descending with a light bound from her perch, she clasped that gentleman's arm with the joyous freedom of a spoiled child.

"What have you two been talking about?" said Stanley, stepping to Maiblume's side, while George turned suddenly away and seemed intent on the bark of a silver birch.

Maiblume looked round with a quiet face.

"I have not been talking at all," said she, carelessly. "Coila has been arranging my future with the magical aid of a fern-leaf—that's all."

Stanley's scrutinizing glance fell; he opened the gate, and they walked all together down the quiet, grassy lane into the ravine, with the sea-beach full in front.

ness; yet she clung all the while to Mr. Verne with a timorous, retiring air, as if, half afraid of the younger gentlemen, she felt, truly happy and safe with the old, so that Mr. Verne, full of wonder and admiration, could not see an inch beyond the pretty Parisienne. They arrived at the beach, and stood a moment—the sunset crimsoning their faces—to drink in the crisp of the noble sea-scene. Maiblume, drawing a long breath, said at length:

"Oh, that this could last forever!" Stanley and Laurie turned simultaneously to her, each with eager attention; but she looked at neither, seemingly forgetful of all save the broad, glistening expanse with its trailing fringe of foam at their feet. "Monsieur Papa," cried Colla, nestling up to him, "I want somebody to repeat a poem about the sea; and somebody else to go out to the rocks over there and pluck me some dulse; and I want both my desires gratified at once. Monsieur, my dear papa, will you not direct the kind gentlemen to do this?"

"By all means, my dear child," laughed Mr. Verne. "Which do you wish to send dulse-gathering?"

"A thousand thanks!" cried Colla, with her most delicious lip. "Monsieur George knows the rocks by heart—and so does Monsieur Stanley the poem; behold, then! And Maiblume will applaud the poem while I eat the dulse so briny, so delicate!"

With a smile at her saucy grace George started on his errand, while Mr. Stanley drew a sudden breath of relief, and, well pleased with the part assigned him, dived into the stores of his mind for some poem worthy of the theme and of his charming audience.

Just then Colla uttered a little petulant cry. "Maiblume!"

"What, my dear Colla?"

"Monsieur George—he knows not dulse from eel-grass!"

"Ah! that's fatal. Recall him."

"But you know every fairy weed that waves from ocean rock. Maiblume, sweet life, do you accompany him!"

Cool request, was it not?

And, utterly unconscious of the poet's freezing stare, and Maiblume's gasp and burning blush, the little simpleton urged it persistently.

"Go, Maiblume," said Mr. Verne, laughing heartily; "the poem can await your return."

"May I accompany?" almost pleaded Stanley.

Maiblume only waved her hand in stately dismissal, and with a quiet step followed George down the level sands.

Anon he glanced behind, and seeing her coming hastened back to her with glad smiles.

"You are coming to help me, are you?" cried he, gayly; "thanks; it is a much better arrangement than mademoiselle's."

"This too is mademoiselle's," observed Maiblume, her deep, sweet eyes on the ground.

Side by side over the firm, wet sand, while the gentle wavelets crept up to kiss their feet, and ran back laughing to whisper in old Ocean's ear of a tale as eternal as the song he sings; side by side, while myriads of white sand birds started up from before them and circled around them, merrily chattering their congratulations; side by side, while the wild roses leaned low from their hedge above, and the honeysuckle sent down its streamers of triumph to bless and greet them on their way, and even the grim face of the sea-washed rock seemed flushed with kindly sympathy!

Oh, she was beautiful, this Maiblume!

"Miss Maiblume, you wished that this might always last," said George, in a hushed voice. "Are you then so very happy here?"

"Very happy," answered Maiblume, softly; "very happy and at rest."

"May you always be so!" said George, with sudden fervent passion. "May no blighting shadow ever fall across your path!"

He spoke with such unexpected energy that she turned quickly, and, seeing him pale and agitated, exclaimed, hurriedly:

"George, what is the matter? What do you fear for me?"

"Don't ask me, dear Miss Maiblume," faltered he. "I have no right to speak to you on such a subject."

"You have a right," cried she. "Have we not always been like brother and sister? Have we not always been the frankest of friends toward each other? Dear George, don't let us misunderstand each other now! I value your friendship beyond words—and—and—your sympathy."

As she finished in a tone vibrating with a strange, sweet emotion, she gave him her velvet hand. Its touch set all his being thrilling with a little shiver of pain, and as he clasped it close, his heart swelled and swelled and tears rushed into his eyes.

For oh, he loved her with that deepest and truest of loves—the first-born!

A rugged column of weed-swathed rock screened them from the eyes of those they had left behind; a tongue of rough stones ran outward from before them, into which the sea swirled its pallid froth and glistening brown wave; not a soul was in sight.

"Have I a right to disturb your peace with my ungenerous fears?" said George, trembling; "will it be any proof of the affection I have always had for you, to trouble and perplex you with my undefined suspicions concerning one whom you seem to hold dear?"

"Wait a moment!" exclaimed Maiblume, gazing up in his agitated face with wonder in her own; "you speak most strangely. To whom do you allude?"

"He is not worthy of you, Miss Maiblume!" burst passionately from George while the maiden started and her sweet brow clouded warningly. "You say I have a right to speak—then I will speak! He is as far beneath you as this mass of lifeless pulp is beneath yonder pure light!" and he pointed to the tremulous evening star, while he spurned a starfish from the dry stone at his foot.

A moment's deep pause, then she lifted her great, magnetic eyes full to his.

"George," breathed the low voice, which was all music to his heart, "never mention him again. Don't fear for me; I could not love him even if he asked me, and he never has."

"Thank you thank you!" faltered George, turning very pale, for this was not what his boding fears had prophesied; and he pressed her two flower-soft hands within his with unconscious strength, and his pulses quickened wildly, and his kindling eyes dwelt upon hers so burningly, that little by little the rare, cold beauty warmed and glowed into rich, pulsating life; her proud eyes drooped; her sumptuous bosom rose and fell with half-gasping sighs; she sought in fluttering uncertainty to release herself—and even while she averted her tell-tale face, her treacherous heart melted, and she leaned more and more upon him!

Another moment and she would have melted wholly and yielded to the luring spell of the youth's first wordless declaration of love; but, like a sprite from some eerie land, a strange boy-figure came out of the shadowy

caves behind them and lifted up his wan, unearthly visage with a sudden cry. "My God!" muttered George Laurie, hoarsely, and he started from Maiblume's side as if shot.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 313.)

RESPONSE TO "DOLOROSO."

BY JOHN GOSSIP.

This is the song of the soul that waits On the hither side of the Golden Gates: Forevermore, dear own, to thee My arms are outstretched yearningly; For-ermore I long to see My darling's eyes bent down on me; Forevermore, oh, God! I pray, Bring back to me that joyous day When death seemed further than the sky, And love, we vowed, should never die; When, clasping palms and pressing hearts, We set our faces 'gainst all darts; Content to know that whatso came, Love's foemen could not steal our flame; Content to feel that no death Our reath should be each other's breath! Oh, song so sad and sweetly sung! Yield solace to the soul that sings; So that, when others' knells are rung, They may not feel, as he, their stings; Teach hearts who hear thee that afar Forever rings thy broken strain; And that beyond the Upper Bar Dwells she who sings thy sweet refrain!

Vials of Wrath:

OR,

THE GRAVE BETWEEN THEM.

BY MRS. MARY REED CROWELL, AUTHOR OF "TWO GIRLS' LIVES," "LOVE-BLIND," "OATH-BOUND," "BARBARA'S FATE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XLV.

BATTLING WITH THE UNSEEN.

THE moment Mrs. Argelyne closed the door of the bedroom after her, and thus relieved Ethel of the restraint of human presence and human watchfulness, the full tide of the girl's awful misery surged over her with a force she neither attempted to resist or accept passively. She sprang from between the blankets in a perfect frenzy of unrestrained panic. She looked her door with trembling, nervous hands, and then, forgetting prudence or the demands of her heart, began a nervous, restless promenade that kept time to the one Frank Havelstock was performing in his luxurious office.

Her little, bare feet were colder than ice, yet she never experienced the physical discomfort; her face was growing more and more waxen and corpse-like in pallor, and from out her eyes looked a weird, horrified fear, that was pitifully appalling; that showed to what a fearful tension her nerves were strung.

She clasped her hands to her temples as if they were bursting with agony; and all the while her restless, frightened eyes seemed forever watching for the object that had wrought all the havoc of her life.

Up and down she walked until thoroughly exhausted, then, by a great effort, she unlocked her door and crept into the bed again, weak and faint in body, but suffering with supernatural mental torture.

She lay as still as a statue, with only her dark, anguished eyes giving token of the life and the agony within.

She looked all around the room; at the careful preparations she had made for her journey to her new, beautiful home; she saw, with a stony calmness of expression on her face, the little, tender remembrances of her happy life in the house where she lay, broken and crushed now, and then all her exquisite torture welled to her lips in one comprehensive word: "Alive! Alive!"

Her voice terrified her, so ghostly it seemed, so apocalyptic; and she moved her head on the pillow, as if to get away from herself.

That one word told it all. It portrayed all the different stages of horror, surprise, anguish and fear through which she had passed in the past fateful hours; it explained, to her perfect satisfaction, the dark presentiments that had clouded her over with this gloom so many times.

To her own mind, as she lay there helpless, passive under the successive billows of suffering that rolled in continuous fierceness over her, everything was confused, dark, inexplicably intermingled. She had only comprehended the indisputable facts of Frank Havelstock's existence, and the knowledge that she was the wife of two husbands.

For a time only those two ideas stared her in the face, and the consequences of her position, an innocent woman who had unconsciously broken the laws of her country, and brought odium and disgrace on the only friends she had in the world.

Gradually she found herself inquiring how it could have happened—the supposed death of Frank Havelstock. Had he really been so near death that everyone thought he was dead? But, granting such to be the case, why the long, long silence he had maintained toward her? Had he been glad of the opportunity to get rid of her? Was it possible he had ceased loving her? Could he—

With a little gasping cry of horrified anguish the whole truth occurred to her, with one of those undeniable intuitions that come to us, sometimes, that take hold of us with a grip of awful truthfulness, that will admit of no possible misconception; that will not be denied, or dismissed, or quieted into forgetfulness.

So it came to her—as perfect a knowledge of the actual facts of the case, as if she was personally concerned, as if she had witnessed the entire course of the vile affair.

She knew it had been a hoax, despite the apparently indisputable evidence Mr. Vinoy recalled his name without an effort, so keenly sharpened by suffering were her mental faculties—that Frank's friend, Mr. Vinoy, had shown her. He, too, had been deceived, else why his kindness to her and the trouble he had taken?

She knew Frank had been living all this while, that she had seen his living face that day; but what mystery lay at the bottom of it all? Why had he deserted her, under such a specious cause—she, who had loved him so?

It had been well done. Havelstock had rid himself of her, for what she could form no idea; and she, emerging from her sorrow and trouble, had just learned to be happy again, only to meet, face to face, a horror she never had imagined befell people in real life.

As she lay there, gradually yielding to the draught of salinarian Mrs. Argelyne had bade her take, she knew, with a feeling that was a strange commingling of pleasure and pain, that this unknown, intangible fate of hers was the reason she found herself forgetting so a vow after her husband's supposed death. She comprehended now the rebellion of her nature against the injustice she had been unconsciously

suffering; and, with a throb of gasping, almost deathly agony, as she took in, in one comprehensive sweep of thought, the depth, heinousness and malignance of the wrong Frank Havelstock had done her, without cause or provocation, every tender memory of the man who had been to her, once, all and in all, forever died in her, and in its place sprang up a repellant horror that time only increased as the days went on.

But, with all these tumults raging in her, she gave no outward sign, made not a moan beyond that one gasp of mortal pain when she severed the last bond to her other life. She lay in among the pillows, like a crushed flower, with wide open eyes, stony with desperate despair; with firm closed lips, on which no prayer formed, from which no complaint came.

She seemed paralyzed with a pain too acutely awful for any mode of expression; she just took all the content of the vials of wrath that her fate poured for her to drink, and in silence she drained to the bottommost dregs.

Very gradually the quieting draught gained ascendancy over her; her eyes lost their deliberative, despairing stare, her lids drooped slowly, until the dark, golden lashes lay motionless on her marble-white cheek, her hands lost their rigid clutch of the white lace ruffles that fell over her wrists, and the sharp lines of her figure, that had looked like the thrillingly awful shape of a dead body, relaxed into her usual graceful curves and lifelikeness.

Her sleep was dreamless, deep and long. Mrs. Argelyne had stolen in silently several times, to report to Leslie, who paced the library floor in an impatient suspense, that refused, at length, to be content with his aunt's reports.

"I am going up myself, aunt Helen. Why should I not when my own darling wife is there, alone with her mysterious illness?"

He went softly up stairs alone, and turned the handle of Ethel's door with cautious care, and then crossed quickly, noiselessly to the bedside.

He leaned over her in an inexpressibly tender way, with his loving, pitying gaze bent on the sweet, unconscious face in a silent devotion.

He touched her hand as a devotee would touch a shrine, reverently, adoringly. He caressed her hair, that was flowing over the pillow, down one of her beautifully curved shoulders, with a touch so light and soft that the faintest slumber would not have been disturbed by it, much less the deathly deep sleep that held Ethel as in a trance.

"My little darling—my little wife! How she has suffered—just see the purple circles under her eyes, and the white line around her mouth. Poor, precious one!"

He said it to himself in a low, caressing tone, as he looked yearningly at her, the while gently patting her hand, that lay lifeless and limp on the silken coverlet.

"I wonder what ailed her? has she heart disease? God forbid! it will kill me if she suffers like this often. Can it have been occasioned only by the natural excitement of our marriage, as aunt Helen insists? I think not—Ethel is a girl of wonderful coolness and control, and surely in our peculiarly quiet wedding there was nothing to create undue nervous excitement."

His thoughts were visible in the pained anxiety on his fine face as he bent nearer his wife's still, beautiful figure. Her breathing was so light, even, that he could barely detect it, and he leaned his ears against her lips as if afraid she were not breathing at all.

"If she should die! oh, my darling!"

He knelt beside her then, in an almost frenzied impulse of sorrow, burying his face on the bedside, while heavy, passionate sobs shook his frame.

"It would kill me to lose her, when I have only just found her; when I've waited so long for her—my own, own darling! Can it be she is dying—she is so still, so white!"

He raised his eyes, that were red with weeping, to look at her, with a yearning, passionate love that showed how completely he had merged his whole happiness in her keeping.

As he watched her he grew calmer; he stood silently beside her with folded arms and sad, wistful eyes.

"There would be but one thing worse than her death—and that is—to learn the cause of all this mysterious illness, this plainly visible suffering of mind and body, was that she regretted our marriage upon realizing she was of a verity my wife. Can that be the reason? Oh! my God—can I have stumbled upon the secret of her indisposition?"

The perspiration started on his forehead and palms at the sudden thought, and a swift horror surged over his face.

But only for a moment; then he smiled tenderly, pityingly upon her.

"I am beside myself—forgive me, my darling! and may God spare you to me, to let me make you so happy and content that I will be all the world to you! God help me to be more worthy of you, my peerless one, my own!"

He stooped and kissed her lips in reverent worship, then went out, quietly, with a prayer in his heart and the touch of her sweet mouth lingering on his lips. Went from Ethel's presence with no foreboding of the weary, heart-sick days, the sleepless, watchful nights that were doomed to intervene before he saw her sweet suffering face again.

CHAPTER XLVI.

"ONLY A SUGGESTION."

GEORGIA's life at Tanglewood had at length settled into that pitiful, dead level existence that crushes every feeling, restrains every emotion, and makes the act of existing a mere monotonous passivity.

She had suffered to the fullest limit of her capacity; she had drained her vials of wrath to their bitterest sediment; she had endured all the force of tempest after tempest, and yet lived.

Because she did not die, Georgia had come to dread nothing. Because she had nothing more to dread, she had nothing to hope; and when there comes into a woman's life any fatality that is strong enough to quench the fires of hope, to the tiniest smoldering spark, as in Georgia's case—then God help her to bear the burden of living!

To Georgia, not the least endurable of her burden, was that portion of it caused by the impenetrable calmness and icy courtesy which Lexington never failed to manifest toward her, which would have frenzied her, with its polished hollowness, had she not been blunted by past agonies, until she felt actually past even caring to think.

The rigid etiquette of Tanglewood was maintained with pompous regularity. Dinner was served to Georgia and Lexington alone with as much style and ceremony as if a dozen guests of the most distinguished character had dined with them.

Lexington, dressed with precise elegance, and expected Georgia to present herself in full dinner toilet. Before the solemn, liveried butler and his corps of well-drilled waiters, the

widely-separated pair maintained a light, gossiping chat; and when left to themselves, over their walnuts and Johannisberger, not the most argus-eyed eavesdropper would have found fault with manner or conversation.

It was a pitiful life—a horrid succession of more horrid mockeries; a mere existence that only needed a few weeks longer to culminate in a desperate tragedy—for very misery's sake.

Occasional guests came, and departed in silent ecstasies over their entertainment and entertainers; occasional calls were made by the handsome reserved pair who carried their family pride and hauteur so becomingly. There were the daily drives, which Lexington politely insisted upon; when he accompanied her, and conversed in his exquisite way on all possible points of interest. All through the winter, since the fateful night of the affair in the conservatory, there had been occasional entertainments in the neighborhood, to which Lexington had escorted his wife, and in turn they had given a series of amateur theatricals, concerts, readings and tableaux.

Through all the times Lexington preserved the same perfect courtesy, and Georgia the same quiet, graceful acceptance; while hourly the yawning chasm widened and deepened.

It was the very perfection of fearful mockery—their death-in-life; and the only actual perception Georgia found herself conscious of, was that sooner or later, in the natural course of human events, she would die—and so the end of it all would come.

In those darkest days, Amber was the one comfort of her life. To her alone, of all the wide world, could she pour out her whole heart's bitterness, and from her she invariably received a fresh courage that enabled her to endure a little longer.

"It must come out all right at last, Mrs. Lexington. I believe there are such happy days ahead for you that when they come you will admit they were cheaply bought, even by this apparently hopeless despair. Cheer up, Mrs. Lexington! remember that no pure, innocent, suffering woman ever could, according to God's mercy, go down to death under the cloud of suspicion."

In after days, Georgia remembered Amber's words, and thanked God for giving her her faithful friend and counselor.

Into the midst of all this hopelessness there came a gleam—only a few lines on heavy tinted, perfumed, crested paper; only a hurriedly-written note from Ida, asking Georgia and her husband to come to her and her husband for the week promised them, in early April.

Only that—and yet it was the turning-point in more than one destiny; only that, and yet a more powerful influence over several lives could not have been imagined.

Georgia read it at the breakfast table and handed it to her husband, who glanced briefly over it.

"We will go, if we promised. There is Mrs. Argelyne also, to whom we are indebted. He always spoke so politely, and distantly, and in all their frigid intercourse since Ida's wedding night, the name of Carleton Vinoy, or the subject of their wide estrangement had never been alluded to however remotely.

Georgia had never seen Vinoy or heard of him from December to April. She was perfectly indifferent on the subject, since he had wrought his horror, and in her dull apathy she would not have cared if he had come daily. She had no more to dread now—nothing to hope—these were the words that sung like a knell in her crushed heart—never ceasing night or day.

This proposed visit to New York was powerless to excite the slightest pleasurable anticipation. She made her arrangements mechanically, supposing there would be operas to attend, theaters to visit, drives to take, friends to receive, calls to make—and further, there was nothing.

Amber packed her trunks with her elegant garments, while Georgia listlessly watched her; and then, one balmy day in April, when grass was springing greenly, and buds bursting from their calyxes in impetuous delight that the bland spring breezes had come to woo them from their hiding-places, Lexington and Georgia went to New York—that strangely contradictory place where wealth and poverty live almost side by side, where misery and happiness sit opposite each other, where vilest sin and purest innocence are, frightfully close neighbors.

And her fate was coming to her, as it had never come before—here in this great busy place, where she was so lonesome, so continually mocked with surface gaiety and hollow happiness. Six months before, to have lived from Tanglewood, even to the sands of Sahara—anywhere from the possibility of Carleton Vinoy's presence—would have been almost a satisfaction; while to have gone to the busy, crowded city, where one is more alone and better hidden than anywhere else on earth, would have been positive relief to the hunted, heart-sore woman.

But now—New York and Sahara were equally places of indifference to her, since Carleton Vinoy's comings and goings could not again affect her.

That Vinoy was in New York she did not know; that he was so intimately connected with Ida's husband, in his nefarious plans, she, of course, did not know; so that when Havelstock saw, to his satisfaction, the widened breach between Lexington and Georgia, he also saw that neither of the miserable pair for a moment associated him with their troubles.

Lexington had not been an hour in Havelstock's company before he discovered that there was something amiss, and as the two sat over their wine and walnuts the first day of the visit, Lexington adverted to the fact of what he had observed.

"You are not ill, Frank? You must be 'Frank' to me to the end of the chapter, notwithstanding the silver door-plate bearing the legends of 'John Lexington.'"

"I am not sick, that I know of; why, do I look out of sorts?"

Havelstock raised his haggard face, with its restless, glistening eyes, to Lexington's, who answered decidedly:

"Yes, you do. You look like a man who had heart-sickness or head-sickness, and yet I suppose I am very foolish to imagine anything troubles you."

He said it very bitterly, as if pointing a contrast between himself and Frank.

Havelstock smiled, gloomily. "Do you think no one but yourself knows what trouble is? Not that I have any in particular," he added, hastily.

Lexington watched him with affectionate interest, as he spoke.

"Are you disappointed in your wife, Frank? Tell me, frankly, for I feel a responsibility in the matter. If you are not happy I shall never forgive myself."

"Ida is all well enough. Ida is all right; and I doubt if there is a happier couple far or near than we are. You are mistaken, I assure you, in supposing there is any trouble on my

mind, at least of more consequence than an unfortunate little investment."

Lexington's brows cleared. "I am thankful for that. I feel I could not endure to see your life wrecked as mine has been—to see your future blank and hopeless as mine is."

Havelstock's countenance assumed an expression of most intense concern.

"I have been impatient to ask you if the terrible breach between you and Georgia was not narrowing. It seemed to me my marriage would have had a good effect on you both, and perhaps have been the means of a reconciliation. I was very foolish and romantic, I suppose, but I did so hope to find you lovers when I came home."

A deathly pallor was creeping slowly over Lexington's face, and when he answered his voice was husky with genuine pain.

"You were always the best friend I had, and I know how your faithful, loyal heart will ache when I tell you what I dared not write, Frank—her—she has—"

It seemed as if the awful words refused to frame into sentences. He bowed his head on his breast, little seeing that on Havelstock's face was a smile of malignant triumph, of ill-concealed contempt for the man he so successfully hoodwinked; a smile that vanished with marvelous speed, and transformed as it fled, into well simulated pity for the revelation to be made.

It came, presently, the whole pitiful story, from the hour of the marriage-feast to the moment of its recital; and Havelstock listened as if petrified into dumb surprise.

"Carleton Vinoy alive—alive! and you the—and Georgia the wife of two husbands! Great heavens—Lexington, is it true?"

He seemed almost beside himself with grief and astonishment.

"True as fate, pitifully true as doom itself. But it is not the worst, Frank."

He said the words so impetuously, that they brought real, unfeigned wonder into Havelstock's eyes.

"Not the worst! what can be worse than to know the awful position you occupy, to know that your wife is not your wife, to know she prefers the love and caresses of the man you thought was dead?"

If Havelstock meant to harrow Lexington's feelings to their very uttermost depths, he certainly succeeded; for in the words that came for answer, leaping hotly from his anguished lips, was the very essence of mad passion and jealous, bitter pain.

There is one thing worse than all that—and of that cup of wrath I am daily drinking to the dregs—while she never dreams of the truth. And that worse thing is—this increasing, scorching knowledge that I love her, with all the force and strength of my nature, fiery, jealous as it is! I love her with a madness that consumes me; I worship the very dirt she spurns with her dainty feet!—and yet, I feel I could kill her for her falsity!"

"Or Vinoy, your fortunate rival."

It was merely a suggestion, quietly said, born of the anger and jealousy in Havelstock's heart as he thought of Vinoy's triumph over him in regard to Ethel Verne; only an embodiment in words that conveyed, so matter-of-factly, the wish of his heart, that Vinoy were out of his way, so he might have a clear track to run on in his search for, and possession of the only woman in all the world whose touch made his nerves tingle so acutely. For he had determined to find her; he had sworn to see her; he had registered a vow to have her for his own again, despite Vinoy, or Verne, or human intervention.

Only a suggestion, and even its real motive unsuspected by Lexington, who little dreamed that Havelstock dreaded Vinoy's rivalry as much as he himself had reason to fear it.

But the suggestive hint struck a strange chord in the breast of the man who uttered it, while to him to whom it was said, it was of no importance.

If Vinoy were dead! Everything would be hidden, every track covered, every footstep erased, and Ethel once more his own, which he knew with a sure certainty would never be if Vinoy willed otherwise.

He had realized, since the day of Ethel's marriage, and their sudden encounter, with keen bitterness, how completely he was in Vinoy's power; how very precarious was the foundation on which he rested—one which would crumble under his feet at a breath from Vinoy's lips.

It had occurred to him again to-day, with impressive force, as he listened to Lexington; but for the first time, to his credit be recorded, had his fear, his distrust, his vain regrets for the confidence he had given, taken tangible form.

Now, the sudden idea staggered him with its awfulness—for one single second, during which the perspiration stood in drops on his chalky-white face; then, on the instant, he resolved to use his righteous indignation over his cousin's foul wrongs, as a convenient cloak for his own wickedness. He sprang excitedly from his chair, nearly upsetting the tiny wine-glass at his elbow.

"The man doesn't exist who dare tamper with your happiness with impunity! I shall make it my business to hunt this craven coward to his hole, and demand the satisfaction of the family name and the family honor."

The giant borderer glided up beside them, his features once more composed and wearing their usual look of cold steadiness.

In truth it was a thrilling, blood-curdling sight that lay spread before them.

Almost at their feet lay the level, circular, basin-like inclosure, now brilliantly illuminated, not alone by the clear rays of the rising moon. Every detail, each figure, each point of rock stood out clear and distinct in the red glare of the fires. Around these fires were gathered the plumed and paint-debauched savages, now standing still and statue-like, listening to the words of their chief, who had once more assumed his role of Black Tiger, hiding his white blood beneath the funeral mask of black paint. His words were not audible to the trio upon the hill-top, but their import could be gathered from his gestures.

There were half a dozen captives bound to as many stakes firmly planted in the ground. Among them were young and lovely women—now brutally exposed, their white flesh shining clearly beneath the fire-light. Their heads bowed, their locks disheveled—their very attitude betrayed what devilish tortures they had already undergone, so great that death would almost seem a precious relief.

There were two other captives, bound back to back in such a manner as allowed them to stand upright, though any attempt at escape would be impossible. These two, man and woman, were dressed. Even across the intervening distance the scouts recognized Don Felipe Raymon and his wife.

"The accursed dogs!" breathed the young plainsman, fiercely. "To serve poor, helpless women like that! Oh! for a dozen good men to scatter the cowardly curs—or even for my poor horse—they shouldn't have it all their own way."

Mini Lusa covered her face with her hands and covered close to the ground with a bitter groan of anguish. She had recognized her father and could not mistake the leading part he was playing in this revolting tragedy. It was the first time that she had seen him at his worst—until now he had carefully kept the worst from her.

It was a painful ordeal for the comrades—to be forced to stand idle witnesses of the revolting crime; to see the helpless captives insulted and abused, to know that with every moment a horrible death was drawing nearer—yet unable to lift a finger in their defense. It would have been utter madness for them to have attempted interference, and though brave and daring to a fault, they crouched down beside the gray rocks in silence.

For half an hour longer the devilish preliminaries lasted, then, with a loud, ringing whoop, the Mad Chief gave the signal for the ready torches to be applied.

Was it an echo that shrill, prolonged, quivering cry. No—the cadence is different, and see—the Pawnee braves would not express such wondering surprise and consternation at a mere echo.

Again the wild, thrilling sound—now accompanied by the rapid trampling of horses' hoofs upon the chalky shale.

"Comanche war-cry, by the eternal!" cried Jack Rabbit, springing to his feet. "It's Keoxa—glory be to Moses!"

Through the narrow entrance into the circular valley, riding down the frail skin lodges now all unguarded, charging direct for the confused and startled swarm around the fires, came a number of wild horsemen, peeling forth their peculiar battle-cry, brandishing their lances, sending before them a cloud of arrows, the dim, uncertain light magnifying their numbers—on thundered the Comanches, led by a tall young chief whose voice rang loudest and most clear, the voice of Keoxa, the beloved son of Quantili, the Great Eagle of the Comanches.

Heading straight for the captives whose agonized voices now arose from the midst of the flame-tinged smoke, the young chief led his braves, plying their bows with an address that had already crimsoned the torn and trampled sward, then leveled their lances and tore boldly through the hastily rallied Pawnees, who flocked around their chief, whose loud voice commanded them at all risks to guard his two more precious captives.

This much the interested trio upon the hill-top saw, and then thoroughly fired by the exciting scene they broke through their forced caution.

"We must help them, old man," and Jack Rabbit breathed quick and hard. "The little one can stay here."

Mini Lusa, just as the young scout spoke, sprang lightly down the rocky incline, sure-footed as the mountain-goat. After her darted Jack, but active as he was, the desert-bred maiden proved more than his match, keeping a score yards in advance, paying little heed to his anxious calling, seeing only her father's danger as he mingled in the thickest of the now desperate hand to hand fight.

Over the broken, uneven rocks, across the level space—then the light form of Mini Lusa disappeared amidst the melee. Jack plunged headlong after her—but then his hands were full with taking care of his body, as the nearest Pawnees recognized and turned fiercely upon him.

Side by side the comrades fought, and fortunate enough it proved for the young plainsman that one so cool and skillful was watching over his life, for he darted through and through the swaying mass, seeking for Mini Lusa, scarce heeding the many blows that were aimed at his life by both Pawnee and Comanche. But the dumb scout proved a famous body-guard. Of the many blows and thrusts not one fairly reached its intended victim, while rifle-barrel or pistol-shot promptly cleared their way.

This madness of Jack's lasted only for a minute; then his attention was distracted by the piercing shrieks of the unfortunate captives to whose bare limbs the scorching flames had now reached, and whose tortures became unendurable.

Knife in hand he sprang to the rescue, nobly seconded by Tony Chew. The blazing fagots were hurled aside, the bonds were severed and the poor flame-scoured wretches were bidden save themselves as the scouts pressed on to complete their work of mercy.

In two instances at least they were too late—the savage tomahawk had been before them. And once again they were forced to look to their own lives as the thick of the fight rolled their way. Then it was that Tony Chew touched Jack by the shoulder and pointed to where the tall form of Black Tiger towered above his braves, his blood-dripping hatchet flashing in the red glare of the fires, his long white hair streaming loose, a devilish glitter in his eyes as he forced his two captives back toward the hill foot.

"On, then!" grated Jack, hoarsely. "Save them—but spare his life for her sake!"

Side by side they charged, their revolvers speaking rapidly for a few moments, until empty; then with clubbed rifles the comrades beat back the sullen foe. But when one brave fell another wolf-child took his place, keeping

the line unbroken that surrounded the Mad Chief and his valued captives.

Then, shrill and piercing as the scream of the eagle, rung out the voice of Keoxa, and with one well-directed charge he broke the firm front of the Pawnees and hurled them to either side. Then the combat raged more and more fiercely, but the wolf children were growing discouraged and were forced back more rapidly. Twice the Mad Chief uplifted his tomahawk to make sure of his revenge while yet it lay in his power, but as often lowered it when the chance of reaching the rocks grew momentarily brighter. Then it was too late. With a panther-like leap Tony Chew overthrew two stout braves and dashed Black Tiger aside with a stunning sweep of his rifle. Then he and Jack hurried the buffalo-hunter and his wife back to the rear, bewildered and stunned, yet alive and safe in limb.

Seeing the fall of their great chief and believing him slain, the Pawnees broke and fled in dismay, clambering over and up the rocks like frightened goats. After them sped the yelling, triumphant Comanches, until the clear voice of Keoxa sounded the recall. With admirable discipline the signal was obeyed.

Then and not until then did the young chief recognize the two scouts, and springing to the ground he bowed before them, pressing their blood-stained hands to his breast.

"Keoxa said he would come, and he is here. His heart is very glad that his brothers are both well."

"You are better than your word, chief," hastily replied Jack Rabbit, warmly clasping the Comanche's hand. "If you had not come before the day set, you would have found only our bones."

Keoxa did not sleep along the trail," was the quiet reply. Then, with a motion of his hand, he called his braves around him.

A low murmur ran through their lines as the firelight shone full upon the strongly-marked features of the dumb scout. They recognized the being who had sent black gloom and bitter mourning into so many of their lodges—and more than one hand quickly clutched at knife or hatchet handle. But a quick gesture restrained their passions.

"Peace—these are my friends and brothers, and their enemies are my enemies. They saved my life when death seemed certain, and not long after I had been trying to kill them. That made us friends. White Hair—the whom you know as Silent Tongue—has buried the hatchet forever with the Comanches."

And in a few pointed words the young chief told them the tragic story of the dumb scout; of all he had suffered, of his vow to punish the false friend who had tortured him and then sought refuge with the Comanches, ending with the death of White Crow, the renegade. The story was well received. Not one among them all but would have acted the same under similar circumstances. And from that day thenceforward, neither of the two borderers had cause to fear aught from the Comanche nation.

During all this talk Jack Rabbit had been burning with impatience, but knew that he must wait until the end. No sooner did it come, though, than he hastened to the spot where Black Tiger had fallen. His search was in vain. Either the Mad Chief had escaped of his own accord, or some of his braves had succeeded in removing the body.

From this he searched the entire field of battle for some sign of Mini Lusa, but again in vain. She was not among the dead or wounded. He answered not his voice as he called aloud her name. His heart felt heavy within him. To lose her now, after all that had passed!

From end to end he searched the valley, then passed into the half-filled-up pocket, but only the echoes answered his call. Then, despairing, he started to climb the rocks toward the point upon the summit from whence they had first looked down upon the scene of torture, as a final resource. He fancied he saw a light figure flitting before him, and called aloud. Faint and indistinct came the answer—he believed it the voice of Mini Lusa.

With a glad cry he sprang forward, clambering over the rocks in mad haste. He realized his folly, when too late. A gigantic figure uprose before him, with leveled rifle. A blinding flash—a sharp report; and the scout fell heavily backward.

And the voice of Black Tiger rang out in mad triumph.

CHAPTER XXIX.

WEARY WORK.

WITH a hoarse, inarticulate roar the dumb scout sprang forward, and in a marvelously short space of time gained the point where his young comrade lay doubled backward across a boulder, the blood trickling from his forehead, to all seeming dead.

The vindictive, exultant yell of Black Tiger was abruptly cut short as he stumbled heavily over a spur of rock, and had Chew been less completely absorbed in his examination of Jack Rabbit, the star of the Mad Chief would have, then and there, gone down in death. But his time was not yet, and limping hastily along he disappeared amid the shadows.

Raising the limp and nerveless form tenderly in his arms, Tony Chew bore the body down to the level, and beside one of the still smoldering fires. Here a close examination solved all doubts, and he knew that Jack Rabbit would live—that the Mad Chief's bullet, though grazing the young plainsman's temple and inflicting a painful flesh wound, had only temporarily stunned him. And then, holding Jack's head in his lap, tenderly bathing his brow with cold water from the spring, the dumb scout listened to the explanation of Keoxa.

After his preservation from the Pawnee torture-stake by Jack Rabbit, the young chief made all possible haste toward the town of that portion of the Comanches under the especial command of his father, Quantili, the Great Eagle. Yet his journey was quicker over than he could have hoped, since he came across the trail of a hunting party, which his trained eye quickly read, and sending up a signal smoke, in two hours more found himself at the head of half a hundred true and tried warriors, who were only too glad to abandon the hunting-trail for the more exciting war-path.

Dispatching two braves with a message to Great Eagle, Keoxa led the Comanches along the back trail, scarce halting long enough to give their animals a sup of water or mouthful of grass. Yet with all his haste he was not one moment too soon—was too late to save more than two of the captives besides Raymon and his wife. And as he spoke the groans of the three fire-scarred wretches grew fainter and fainter, until, just as the gray light in the east heralded the coming of day, their last breath was drawn and their earthly pains were over.

Before this Jack had momentarily awakened to consciousness, but almost immediately sunk into a sound and refreshing slumber, which lasted for hours. With the exception of a few

guards, all of the Comanches, including Keoxa and the dumb scout, lay down and slumbered until the red sun shone in the circular valley.

When Jack Rabbit awoke, he found the Comanches busily engaged in burying their dead. He and Tony drew aside and conversed earnestly. There could be but one subject, just then: that of Mini Lusa. Their words need not be recorded here, only that Jack earnestly swore he would never give over the search until he had found her.

Felipe Raymon and his wife soon joined them, sorely troubled over the fate of their children. Tony Chew appeared to take even more interest in this than in the other subject, and assured them—through Jack—that no stone should be left unturned, no efforts spared—that the lost ones should be found if mortal skill was equal to the task.

The clue was a faint one; only the report brought in by the Mad Chief's scout that the trail had been found. Since then the high winds had undoubtedly covered this with shifting sands. Only the direction in which it pointed remained to guide them.

Matters were explained to Keoxa, and he announced his readiness to undertake the task, though casting a thoughtful glance over the broken masses of rocks among which the surviving Pawnees had sought refuge. Beaten as they had been, they were still numerous enough to make serious trouble if they rallied under the guidance of Black Tiger, and there were scores of places among the hills where an ambush might be sprung with deadly effect.

Keoxa selected two choice animals from his herd, and presented them to the brother scouts, yet this generosity did not prevent them casting more than one regretful glance toward all that remained of their long-tried and matchless friends, the big "bucks" and the blood-bay. Only once in a lifetime were such superb mounts found, and for the time being the two adventurers felt much as a wild goose must when a newly-crippled wing.

The remainder of the party, including Juanita Raymon, were furnished with mounts from the animals captured from the Pawnees, or else from those no longer needed by the Comanche braves, who had fallen during the brief but sanguinary fight. And then the party slowly filed out from the circular valley, and rode briskly around the rock point, heading for the spot mentioned in the Pawnee scout's report.

From time to time they caught glimpses of one or more skulking figures high up among the rocks, beyond rifle range, and though Comanche eyes glittered and fingers itched, all knew how worse than useless it would be to attempt a chase under the circumstances. The hills were too full of hiding places for that.

"The dogs are curious to know where we are riding, chief," said Jack Rabbit, with a half laugh, pointing toward the ridge, where several nearly nude figures kept almost abreast them, despite the rough and difficult trail they were forced to follow.

"Like the coyotes that follow the hunter, they will keep beyond reach of a man's hand," tersely replied Keoxa, speaking, as Jack had, in Spanish. "They are dogs and children of dogs. When a man looks toward them they run and hide their heads in a hole. Hooh! the air stinks in my nostrils!"

"I like them no better than you, chief, yet I must say that they fight well for coyotes, when that Mad Chief or Black Tiger, whichever you please, leads them. I don't believe we are through with them yet. They have nearly as many braves now as we—and I know that he has more within easy reach. I shouldn't wonder if we found them waiting for us when we return to the valley."

"There is room at our belts for their scalps," quietly replied the young chief; and then the conversation dropped, the chief riding forward to give his scouts fresh instructions, and Jack, busied with his own thoughts, in which the daughter of Black Tiger figured prominently.

It would be weary work to follow them step by step along their blind trail, Jack inwardly chafing at what he could not help thinking was a waste of time, that might be more profitably employed elsewhere. They had nothing but the meager report of the Pawnee runner to depend upon, and he had only spoken of a trail found in the desert, and which had, almost beyond doubt, been since obliterated by the morning and evening breezes.

But at length even his dead interest was awakened. At the mouth of a narrow valley, plain and unmistakable sign was found. Half a dozen empty ears were drawn into a niche. Upon the level plot were signs of an encampment, torn and trampled, marked here and there by blood-stains. And then Senora Raymon uttered a sharp cry. At her feet lay a tiny gold cross attached to a broken hair-chain.

"My child—Rosina!" she cried, and would have fallen from her horse but for the ready arm of Jack Rabbit.

With this faint clue—for the cross had been worn by Rosina Raymon—the ground was closely searched by eyes that could almost trail the honey-laden bee through the air. Keoxa it was that first uttered the cry that told of a discovery, and he pointed out to the agitated father a small, slender foot-print in the moist sand near the foot of a black rock. This, added to Senora Raymon's discovery, convinced them that the right trail had been found, and slowly they proceeded along the valley, lifting the trail with a skill that baffles description. Even Tony Chew, adept though he was, that day found that he had something yet to learn of his favorite art.

Yet the trail could only be made out for a short distance. Where Rosina had left the valley and taken to the rocky hillside, all trace was lost. In vain the Comanches scattered and searched every foot of the ground. Their labor was in vain.

Every nerve tingled as a short, sharp whoop came from around a sudden curve, and, thinking that the lost trail had been found, all hastened thither. A ghastly sight met their gaze. A number of gleaming skeletons lay upon the blood-stained rocks, the bones still bearing marks of the keen teeth which had picked them clean.

From the scattered fragments of clothing, from a number of arrows and plumes, the trail hunters had no difficulty in pronouncing the remains those of Pawnees. But who had slain them? That was fated to remain an enigma, for, despite a close search, nothing further could be learned.

The day was rapidly declining, and even Keoxa began to look keenly around him. For some time the number of skulking figures among the rocks had been increasing, until now they numbered almost as many as the Comanches. From the summit of the ridge, too, the tall black columns of smoke rose nearly to the clouds. The Pawnees were signaling for reinforcements.

Though brave as the bravest, Keoxa knew the value of prudence, and gave the word to return to the circular valley, where they could

successfully assemble their force. It was with a heavy heart that Raymon, supporting his half-conscious wife, followed them. It seemed like turning his back forever upon all hope of ever finding his lost children.

As before, the figures among the rocks bore them company, seemingly growing bolder, for more than one bullet and arrow was discharged from long range at them, but the valley was reached without any actual collision between the rivals.

There a horrible sight awaited them, and even the stoical Keoxa uttered a yell of angry vengeance as he realized the dastardly work that had been wrought during his absence.

The graves had been rifled, the dead braves scalped and mutilated beyond recognition, after which the remains had been placed in ridiculous attitudes, propped up with sticks and stones.

For a time the Comanches stood as if dumb-founded; then, as the triumphant yells came from the rocky heights where the Pawnees were observing their discomfiture, one and all madly rushed forward, panting for vengeance. Nor was it until Keoxa had repeatedly commanded it that they returned. He knew that an attack now, while the enemy were so advantageously placed, could only end in destruction.

"Come, old man Tony," muttered Jack, with a grimace, "this sight has parched my throat. I must have a drink. Let's go to the spring."

Together they rode toward the spring, where the waters gushed freely out from beneath the nearly perpendicular rock walls. But just as Jack freed his foot from the stirrup his face blanched and he uttered a little cry, outstretching his hand.

Tony Chew followed the direction with his eyes, and he, too, shrunk back, instinctively throwing forward the muzzle of his rifle.

From out the bars, unbroken rock, protruded a hand, white as snow, grasping a glittering knife.

CHAPTER XXX.

SUBTERRANEAN WONDER.

SWIFTLY yet steadily Leon Sandoval glided along through the winding passage, his heart throbbing wildly lest the precious bit of wood that already he had been forced to stick upon the point of his knife to keep from burning his hand, should expire before he could regain the bundle of fagots so carelessly left behind. But fortune favored him still, and then, with a freshly lit torch he quickly retraced his steps.

When near the spot where he had parted from his companions, Leon shouted aloud to convey the good tidings. But no answering voice replied—only the dull, rumbling echoes of his own shout. Again he shouted, with the same result, then, with a strange foreboding of ill, he hastened forward, eager, yet dreading to learn the whole truth.

"Holy Mother of Mercy!" The exclamation broke from his lips as he faltered and almost dropped the blazing torch. Before him lay the pale and seemingly lifeless figure of Rosina Raymon—but where was Pablo?

For a moment he glared around as though expecting an attack from some hideous foe—then, forgetting all else, sprang forward and raised the limp, nerveless figure of the maiden in his arms, pressing her cold lips, calling upon her in broken, incoherent accents, while the neglected torch flickered and expired at his feet.

Then, after Sandoval despaired of ever again hearing her voice, Rosina returned to consciousness with a gentle sigh. For a time it seemed to her all a horrible dream, since she awoke with her arms wound around her and his kisses warm upon her lips—but then the dread truth flashed across her mind and amid her sobs she told Sandoval what had occurred.

The young cibolero had been given time to collect himself, and though greatly shocked by the news, it found him cool and collected. By aid of his powder-flask and flint and steel, he quickly relighted the torch, and moving cautiously forward, they soon stood upon the brink of a dark and seemingly fathomless abyss. They saw where the treacherous rock had crumbled and given way beneath the young man's feet, hurling him down to—what? Even the strong-nerved Sandoval shuddered as he realized what Pablo's doom probably was.

The opposite side of the chasm was just visible by the faint gleam of the flickering torch. The width was nearly twenty feet across. The sides seemed nearly perpendicular, if anything widening as they descended.

Pausing beside the abyss Sandoval held a small fragment of rock over the pit and then dropped it, listening breathlessly. After what seemed a terribly long spell he heard a faint, sullen splash, as though the stone had fallen into water. Rosina heard the sound as well, and clung closer to Leon, a little sob of agony parting her lips.

"Mother of God, have mercy upon him! he is lost—lost!"

"It may not be—there may yet be hope," incoherently muttered Leon, yet feeling how vain were any words of hope.

Gently removing the maiden's arms and placing the torch in her hands, Sandoval unwound the lasso from around his waist and securely knotted one end to a projecting point of rock, testing its firmness with all his strength. Then, after a few cheering words to Rosina, while lighting a fresh torch and binding it to his left shoulder, he grasped the slender cord and cautiously swung himself over the verge of the black abyss.

With the thong wound several times around his right leg, the adventurer slowly descended, gradually turning round and round, peering keenly in every direction, listening anxiously; but no sound came to his waiting ears.

Down, still down, until he came to the end of the lariat. Save for the little circle of light cast out by the torch, everything was dark as he swung suspended in mid air. He called aloud, pronouncing the name of his young friend, but only the hollow echoes answered. The strain was growing more and more severe upon his arms, and he dare not wait longer lest he should be incapable of returning. As it was, the feat was almost beyond his power. Only for the aid of Rosina he could never have crawled over the escarpment when reached, and for some minutes he lay panting, breathless, completely exhausted.

Now that Rosina knew the worst, she bore it with more fortitude than could have been expected, only mingling a fervent prayer for the repose of the lost one's soul with her efforts to restore Leon Sandoval. There could only be one solution to the continued silence of Pablo. He must have been killed outright by the frightful fall, or else lay below injured beyond the possibility of answering his calls. And of the two, the first seemed the most preferable; better a sudden and comparatively harmless death than to lie there beyond the reach of human aid.

When he recovered, Sandoval secured the

lasso around his waist and took up the precious bundle of fagots, but he looked at Rosina in silence. She read it aright, and though the words cut her to the very soul, she bravely uttered:

"He is in the hands of his God. We can do nothing for him—nothing but pray. We have our own lives to care for—come, let us go."

Sandoval arose in silence. He knew how weak and worse than useless were words in the face of such a bereavement, but his unoccupied arm stole around the maiden's waist with a new tenderness which she felt and fully appreciated.

The chasm could not be crossed, and so, in hopes of finding a narrower part, or else where it ended altogether, the lovers slowly skirted the edge. They saw the end wall of the chamber grow plainer, while the chasm had not narrowed, and a sickening fear seized upon them—the dread lest this black pit should prove the end of their wanderings by barring their further progress. But then they made out a narrow shelf or pathway running close along the wall, and passing over with one sad, lingering look into the cruel, black depths, they turned their backs forever upon the spot where their new-born hope had received such a blow.

A few moments more brought them to where two tunnels left the chamber, and after some deliberation, choosing the larger, they pressed on, beginning to feel the combined effects of fatigue, thirst and hunger. Gloomy enough were their prospects. More than once they were tempted to sink down and await death, clasped in each other's arms, rather than continue this long, killing struggle, the end of which seemed no nearer than at first. But life is very sweet, despite all, and still they kept on, weary and footsore, their throats dry and parched, their hearts heavy as lead.

The tunnel widened and opened into still another chamber; this time of vastly different shape and appearance. Long and narrow, with high ceiling, the roof, floor and walls of which were true and regular as though planned by a skilled architect.

A low cry of surprise broke from the wanderers. As the light of the torch fell athwart the wall it seemed as though they were in some weird, fantastic picture-gallery, where artists and sculptors of a forgotten age had recorded their grotesque fancies and imaginings.

Here, graven deeply by some keen-edged tool, was a small grove of trees; trees with human bodies and arms, with round, staring faces, with eyes made of coiled serpents, with teeth made of scorpions, surmounted and surrounded by thousands of long, slender serpents, twined and twisted together with a degree of skill almost marvelous. Above all circled a flock of birds. At the base of the trees knelt several naked human beings, bearing offerings of game, fruit, and, in one instance, a tiny babe.

Further along were painted figures of birds, animals and reptiles, some of them familiar and easily recognized, others of strange shape and characteristics—with two, three or a dozen heads; others with no head, only with a cavernous mouth in the middle of the body, into which a score of paws were conveying each a distorted, mangled human carcass.

These, and numbers of other equally grotesque figures attracted the gaze of Rosina and Leon, until, their superstition fully awakened, they fled from the pictured horrors, half-expecting the grotesquely terrible monsters to spring into life and follow them.

Then, the gallery cleared, the wanderers gradually recovered from their sudden fright. They were in another larger, wider tunnel, where the sides and roof glittered and sparkled beneath the torchlight, giving evidence of the precious metal in abundance. But the fugitives gave little thought to this; all the gold in the world would have been rejected for a single cup of cold water and a mouthful of meat.

Just as they came to the edge of a small chamber, the torch in Leon's hand suddenly gave a flicker and died out. He regarded this with impatience, since it must lose them much valuable time in igniting another, but ere long he realized how fortunate it was, and recognized the finger of Providence in what he had deemed a misfortune.

Rosina, with a sudden start, interrupted his preparations, and pointed forward, forgetting that the darkness hid her action. But Sandoval saw what had caused her excitement. Far before them, faint and indistinct, he could make out a faint glow. It was too lurid for daylight—he knew that it was the reflection of a fire. But who had built it friends or foes? Were others than they buried in the heart of the mountain range? Or—and his heart throbbed rapidly between hope and fear—was it a fire kindled at the end of the passage, outside the hill? Had they found a place of exit, only to find it blocked up by cruel and bloodthirsty enemies?

All these reflections passed through his mind with the rapidity of light, then turning to Rosina, he said:

"You stay here—do not stir, darling, while I am gone. I must go and find out what that light means."

"We will go together, then, Leon. You—you are all that is left me now, and I cannot lose—"

"It is only for a moment, pet. There is nothing can hurt me, and I will return soon. That fire may be kindled by enemies, and you cannot creep silently enough for that. Their keen ears would hear you, and then we would both be killed. Remain silently here, and I will soon return."

Pressing her to his breast for a moment, Sandoval turned and silently glided toward the light, cautiously feeling his way lest the horrible fate of poor Pablo might also prove his. The distance was longer than he thought, but at length it was traversed, and he paused beside a point of rock and peered out upon the scene.

It was a long, low chamber, with rough, irregular walls. Near one end glowed the embers of a fire. Upon the rock floor, surrounding the fire, lay stretched the painted, half-nude figures of near a score of savages, Pawnees as he readily decided by their paint. He could see no one standing; all appeared buried in slumber. But then something caught his eyes and caused them to sparkle and his mouth to water freely. Hanging to the points of rock were several leathern water bottles and chunks of dried meat. Nearly famished though he was, he hesitated about incurring such danger, but then the thought of Rosina determined him.

Scarce venturing to breathe, he crawled forward and tremblingly grasped a flask and piece of meat, then turned to retreat. He heard one of the savages stir, and sprang hastily toward the friendly darkness, just as a rifle exploded, followed by a chorus of wild, excited yells, as the Indians bounded to their feet.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 306.)

THE AGENT; OR, THE WAY PEOPLE ARE INSURED.

BY JOE JOY, JR.

- A. Good-day, Brown, it's nice weather out.
B. Indeed, I'm too busy to see to it.
A. I'm soliciting now for the "Life."
B. Well, that doesn't matter to me!
A. It's the very best company out.
B. I'll never get in it, that's mine.
A. But surely you ought to insure.
B. What's your rates to keep off a bore?
A. Life is exceedingly short.
B. Then I pray you don't talk quite so long.
A. Death will come up on you or I, sooner.
B. If you hurry it up it is wrong.
A. Our plan is entirely new.
B. I've heard that before and it's old.
A. I explain you the whole thing at once.
B. Well, I guess I don't want to be told.
A. About what's your age, Mr. Brown?
B. I've not passed the period of senescence.
A. The cost I am going to show.
B. I'd rather you'd be going hence.
A. What disease did your father die of?
B. An attack of insurance galoots.
A. Have you any perceptive complaint.
B. Yes, the jerks, and it gets in my boots.
A. Now, pray, Mr. B., give me leave—
B. That you could have taken before.
A. I'd be pleased to show you our terms.
B. I'd be pleased to show you my door.
A. Won't you take out a policy now?
B. No, but I'll take out an agent right soon.
A. Of course you were never insane.
B. Well, I'm getting as mad as a loon.
A. You have a good deal of health.
B. And you have a good deal of cheek.
A. I'm sure you would be a safe risk.
B. You're risking yourself, so to speak.
A. I'd want to leave something behind.
B. You'll leave your coat-tails by and by.
A. Your breath any moment might cease.
B. You carry an awful supply.
A. Our losses are paid promptly up.
B. Well, your time is now going to loss.
A. I wish you'd go into this house.
B. I wish you'd go out of this house.
A. We agents are not to be bluffed.
B. I see it's your turn to stick.
A. I'll bore you to death every day.
B. Well, write me a policy quick!

The Black Shadow.

BY JENNIE DAVIS BURTON.

"MAY I die if I ever prove false to you," repeated Lucrece.

It was less through love than fear of this dark-browed man, the very strength of whose passion terrified her, that the girl gave the promise he had required. But when, as now, the sternness dropped away from him, she was not disposed to quarrel with the fates which promised her such a husband.

"Mine," he said, with a thrill of joyousness in his voice. "Mine for weal or for woe. Mine for time, and, if such things be possible, for eternity too. It seems to me that love like mine must reach beyond the grave. Ah, little Lucrece! it will seem long until I come to claim my own, and whatever comes meanwhile, remember the words you have said here this day."

She was only sixteen, and there were five years of freedom before her—an eternity to sweet, unthinking sixteen. But she turned pale and shivered as he repeated, with an almost fierce intensity:

"Remember—remember! Oh, shrinking little dove, it is with a faulty one of a faulty race that you have promised to wed, but, such as I am, with all my soul I love you. The Clandarrels are as entire in their loves as implacable in their hates; as generous toward truth as they are unforgiving with deceit, and I, the last of the Clandarrels, swear loyalty to you, my queen!"

It was very fine to be loved and wooed with such Quixotic fervor, though Lucrece would have been as well contented with less love and gentler wooing; but she was an obedient daughter, and Papa Trevor openly beamed his approval upon the result. Certain papers had come into Clandarrel's hands, representing claims to satisfy which would have swept the frail, showy fabric of the Trevor fortune to utter wreck, that need harass him no more.

Five years, even where bliss is deferred to the end of it, even when the two loving and longing hearts beat at the antipodes, are not an interminable time. It was over, but there had been changes meanwhile. Papa Trevor had passed forever from the scenes that once knew him, and Lucrece, standing in her lover's presence for the first time since their long separation, with a soft mournfulness in her fathomless eyes, and in low, sad tones, told him of her loss. Told him also that her father's available means had been accumulating, and that she was prepared to carry out the last wishes of the dead by canceling the long-standing obligation.

"There is nothing owing me," declared Clandarrel. "It is enough that he was your father. I will hunt up those old papers and put them on the fire. I would have done the same had he lived, believe me."

But as she insisted, Clandarrel yielded. He, however, made marriage settlements, giving her thrice the amount of the debt.

There was a wedding in one of the fashionable churches, attended by a fashionable throng, and as the line of carriages containing that select number rolled up the avenue and discharged their occupants at Trevor House, one of those incidents occurred which serve to illustrate the extremes of this world.

As the bride alighted a woman suddenly pushed forward and stood by her side. Such a contrast! The first in her trailing robes of vestal white, a vision of angelic purity. The other a tattered presentment of abject misery, with death stamped in her look. But between the two, the bride and the outcast, there was a resemblance which struck upon every beholder.

They looked straight into each other's eyes for the briefest instant. A bluish ghastliness went over the face of the bride; then, with her hand still upon her husband's arm, she swept up the marble steps and in at the open portal.

The breakfast, the toasts, the stale jests rehearsed for the occasion were over, the guests gone.

The bride was standing by a window of her chamber, her eyes, dilated wildly, fixed on the blank space before her. Suddenly she clutched her hands together and held her breath, listening. Some one entered. A step crossed the floor and paused near her. A voice spoke, her husband's:

"An inconspicuous visitor, that one of yours, Mrs. Clandarrel. Are you in the habit of receiving many such? Really, your charity does you honor. I saw you draw your pure robes away that you might not be contaminated by that wreck of womanhood; an eminently proper proceeding, because, like the pure soul of which they are the fitting outward representation, you must keep them from filth if you would have them remain undefiled. My pride is in knowing that my wife is truth itself. By-the-by, I will do myself the pleasure of

having a word with your pensioner before she departs."

"She has gone," replied Lucrece, without turning her head.

"You surprise me. Is there, then, two shadows of your charming self extant? It seems incredible, but I must believe it if my wife asserts the fact."

He was crossing to the door that opened inward to her sleeping room. She turned her face toward him then—set, icy in its forced calm.

"I beg that you will not enter there," with an effort crushing back the tremor in her voice. But with a chill "Allow me to remind you that mine is now the higher prerogative, madam!" he passed on.

She stood as motionless, as white, as cold as a marble figure, while minutes went by. Presently he returned, his mask-like countenance unmoved.

"She is gone. I ask your pardon for not having apprehended the true meaning of your words. Truly, these people are conscienceless in their demands upon their betters. After your kindness, to think she should presume to die in your house! I read your generous heart so well that I know you have forgiven the presumption, and ordered the removal of the remains, and its burial at your expense. Your example stimulates my charitable zeal. We will let the bridal tour pass and attend the funeral from here, and by this little act of self-sacrifice crown the perfection of our wedded bliss. Have you anything to say?"

"This: I knew her."

"Yes?"

"You have not failed to observe that there was a likeness between us," she said, stonily. "She was a cousin, a poor and friendless girl whom my father took into his house and gave equal advantages with myself. She disappointed our expectations of her by a clandestine marriage. Her husband was a villain, and I believe treated her badly. It gave me a shock to see her appear to-day. I had her brought into the house privately; as soon as I was free I went to her and found her—dead!"

"Very pathetic!"

Did her hearing deceive her, or was there a sneer in the tone?

"Very pathetic and very suggestive. Folly and wickedness invariably lead to woe. Do you know that I firmly believe if you had broken your promise to me, if you had been false to your plighted faith, that you might even now be punished by the fate you invoked—that even now you might be lying in her place?"

"Oh," she cried, with passionate pleading, "take me away. This place stifles me. I am not myself; it unnerves me. Death's shadow is on our wedding-day."

It would almost appear that the shadow was upon their wedded life. What followed was the mockery of a bride's happy anticipations. Her prayer was not heeded. The marriage festivities were exchanged for funeral obsequies, the bridal robes for a dress of mourning, the court which society would have paid the rich Mrs. Clandarrel for the seclusion that follows affliction—a seclusion which the companionship of her lord and master seldom enlivened. Lord and master in very truth! The only husbandly right he ever assumed was that of his authority.

But one guest was received in the home of that "happy pair," and a month after the date that Clandarrel first introduced Mr. Varley, the latter was a daily visitor. During that month the change which had been imperceptibly undermining the beauty and health of Mrs. Clandarrel advanced with a rapid stride.

"She looks as if the sword of that old party, Damocles, you know, hung over her head, and she every moment expecting it to fall," a casual acquaintance remarked.

Now, witness an interview transpiring in Clandarrel's library, and applaud the perception of that observer.

Mrs. Clandarrel sat with her tired face outlined sharply against the purple cushions of her chair. Varley stood opposite, one hand resting hard upon the table beside him, scowling in a manner which ill becomes a gentleman in the presence of a lady.

"I must have money," he was saying, doggedly.

"So you have said before, and as I have told you, you never will receive one dollar from me."

"We shall see. You will make over to me Lucrece Trevor's portion, or the two years' force you have played, madame, ends here."

"You know that money went to liquidate the debt."

"I know that you have three times as much at your disposal; and that you, rolling in riches, have not half my rightful claim to them. I am moderate in my demands. Be reasonable."

"Once for all, I utterly refuse. Do your worst. You cannot make me more miserable than I am."

"Not if I assert my claim to my wife!"

"Villain!"

"I have every proof that Lucrece Trevor became such a year before Clandarrel's return. Deny me again and I shall use those proofs."

"You would use them all the same if I were to give you that money. It would only prolong my suspense."

"But that would be something," he said, coolly.

"I foresaw you would come to my terms. It did not require a prophetic gift. I knew you would, because you are silly enough to care for him."

All women are alike in that. The more a fellow ill-treats them the closer they cling to him."

She had put up her hands to cover her face, but she dropped them and looked at him with a steadiness born of despair.

"I know you too well to trust you; and if I could, I would not buy your silence with my husband's money. All that need be said is said in that."

"Not quite." Both started. It was Clandarrel himself standing before them, serene as ever.

"The law of our land does not allow two husbands to one lady, but we, Mr. Varley, will not appeal to the law for a decision between us. I think you understand. You will hear from me further during the evening."

With a Chesterfieldian bow of dismissal, Mr. Clandarrel held open the door. Varley hesitated, glanced from one to the other, but finally went without a word. Clandarrel would have followed him out, but a hand upon his arm stayed him.

"You were here? You heard what passed?"

"I was in the window embrasure and heard all."

"And you believe it? You believe me that man's wife? It is not true. I was never that. The time has come when all concealments must be swept away, but oh! how can I tell you—how can I?"

"It is only fair to warn you that I have ample proofs in my possession that Lucrece Trevor did marry Varley at the time he claims. This revelation is not the surprise

you think it to me, but simply a confirmation of what had already reached my knowledge."

"Lucrece was his wife; I never was. I am not she. No, I do not rave. I am the cousin; it was she who died upon our wedding day. You cannot hate me worse for telling the truth at last."

"Go on!" She did, and the story was told in hurried, broken tones, of how easy it had been, after the time which had elapsed, to carry out the deception which her resemblance of her cousin had first suggested, and how she had counted upon Lucrece's dread of his implacable wrath to keep her silent.

"Her death," she said, "left me in greater danger than while she lived. Of Varley's base-ness and cupidity you have some idea. The fortune he had expected with her had been the only lure. When he was free he formed the plan. While I claimed to be Lucrece I was in his power, and he used it cruelly. That he tried to extort money from me, and with what result you know. It is all that I need say."

"It is not. I wish to know all. It was the certainty that you could not trust him made you refuse. It was my discovery that Lucrece was really his wife leads you now to confide in me. Am I right?"

"It was more than these. My punishment was heavier than I could bear. I loathed myself for my own treachery. Sooner or later I must have been driven to tell you the truth."

"Have you any idea of how we Clandarrels avenge deceit?"

"The worst that could have already befallen me. I was an outcast from your love."

"Pardon me. I knew in the hour I married you all you have told me now. I saw Lucrece before you went to her. I knew I was wedded to an adventuress who had played a high stake for her own advancement. I knew that the only woman I had ever loved had played me false, and that her life was the forfeit. I sought out Varley and brought him here. I robbed your career of all its anticipated triumphs. The end will be a conflict, and whether Varley falls or I, your lot henceforth will be equally desolate. Unless," bitterly, "a new victim falls under the reign of the siren."

She held her clasped hands toward him with an anguished cry.

"Have you no pity? Can you not see that I love you? Forgive me. I have never repented your unkindness. I will be happy as your slave if you will speak one little word of pardon."

He shrunk away from her. "My love is dead; it can never be revived. Was it not enough to kill it to know I had been fooled; that I had taken a base counterfeit for my heart? All my faith in mankind was blotted out in a single hour. Let the sin rest where it will, we cannot mend the past. And the future is too short for caring."

"Oh, not so! There must be no strife between you and that man. There will be none," she asserted, with bitter contempt. "He is a coward as well as a villain, and now that he knows his exposure of me will bring him no gain, he will try from the reach of your vengeance as fast as I could wish him."

"I thank you for the warning. It shall be observed. I will take steps not to be thwarted by poisoners."

He turned away and left the library, undisturbed by a single word. But for all his expedition, cowardice won. Varley was nowhere to be found when Clandarrel's friend sought him. The news was taken to Clandarrel where he waited, and as the gray dawn broke he went back to his home, his brow black with portent of the sullen anger stirring in his heart. It looked dark for the woman who had dared to come between him and his will.

A light still burned in the library at that unusual hour. He pushed the door and was going in when the sight of his wife, half kneeling, half fallen, her head and shoulders in part supported by a chair, struck him with a pang of sharpest fear. In an instant he was beside her and saw that it was a dead face the light streamed over. There were writing-materials and the signs of their having been used upon a table near, but not a line for him. He needed none. He knew it was her warning had hastened Varley's flight, and that she had found death preferable to the dark life he had left her only choice.

Something more than the pity for which she had vainly pleaded touched him then.

Little matter that he sunk down now and called faintly have in excited tones, as bringing each to the other something interesting and amusing, that home life is to be made cheerful and joyous. Each one must do his part to make the conversation genial and happy. We are too ready to converse with newspapers and books; to seek some companion at the store, hotel, or club-room, and forget that home is anything more than a place to sleep and eat in. The revival of conversation, the entertainment of one another, as a roomful of people will entertain themselves, is one secret of a happy home. Wherever it is wanting, disease has struck into the root of the tree; there is a want which is felt with increasing force as time goes on. Conversation, in many cases, is just what prevents many people from relapsing into utter selfishness at their firesides. This conversation should not only occupy husband and wife and other older members of the family, but extend itself to the children. Parents should be careful to talk with them, to enter into their trifles, to assist in their studies, to meet them in the thoughts and feelings of their childhood. It is a great step in education, when around the evening lamp are gathered the different members of a family, sharing their occupation with one another—the oldest assisting the younger, each one contributing to the entertainment of the other, and all feeling that the evening has passed only too rapidly away. This is the truest and best amusement. It is the healthy education of great and noble characters. There is the freedom, the breadth, the joyousness of natural life. The time spent thus by parents, in the higher entertainments of their children, bears a harvest of eternal blessings, and these long evenings furnish just the time.

MOONLIGHT ON THE SNOW.

BY RUSTICES.

How oft our pleasant thoughts go back
To youthful days now past,
When we were laughing boys and girls;
Would that those days could last!
When winter spread his mantle white,
To frolics we would go;
The fair one's cheeks aglow, boys,
The moonlight on the snow.

With some fair dame snugly tucked
In blankets by our side;
Behind our gayly prancing team
How merrily we'd ride.
Ah, these were glowing, glorious times,
Those days of long ago;
We drank full draughts of pleasure with
The moonlight on the snow.

Perchance we whispered words of love,
And pressed some finger tips;
And stole some nectar too, my boys,
From not unwilling lips.
I tell you, boys, there's magic in
Those tones and accents low,
And something most bewitching
In moonlight on the snow.

No southern clime can e'er impart
Such witchery as this;
Nor warm the generous, glowing heart,
With such a perfect bliss.
The jingling bells, the gliding sleigh,
The fair one's cheeks aglow,
I tell you, boys, there's nothing like
The moonlight on the snow.

Deaf as a Post.

BY EBBN E. REXFORD.

"DEAR MIRANDA!"
"I allus liked the looks o' your oldest girl, an' I'm goin' to bring my son Absalom down to see her afore long. I've told him I thought she was smart an' capable, an' I shouldn't wonder if 't would make a match, of she's willin'." Absalom's a good person to work, and he's a good provider. He's stiddy an' sayin', an' he'll have all the prop'ly when I'm done with it. I hope you'll think favorable of this plan.

"Mar! Smith's got twins. They're poor as poverty. Job Greene's oldest boy got took up fer tuition some money from Deakin Stiles. I hope these few lines will find you enjoying good health."

"Your friend till de'ath,"
SUSAN PARKER.
"N. B.—I guess me 'n' Absalom be down the first o' next week. We can't stay only over night now, but Absalom 'll come ag'in likely, if matters 'n' things turn out favorable."

"Dear, dear! I shall go into convulsions!" cried mother, holding her sides, while the tears ran down her face, as she read this very original epistle. "Dear! dear! It's the most laughable thing of the season. To think of your marrying Absalom Parker! Oh!" and mother went off in another paroxysm of hysterical laughter.

"I don't see anything very comical in it," said I, indignantly. "The idea of her bringing that green, gawky thing down here to inspect me, as if all he had to say or do was to tell me to get ready and he'd marry me, if I happened to suit!"

"I should have enjoyed the prospect of such fun, when I was your age," said mother.

"I don't see where the fun comes in," I said.

"I shall get mad, the first thing, for I shall expect he is looking me over to see what my fine points are, the same as he would a cow he was going to buy."

"Pretend you're deaf, like the girl you was reading about the other day, when the old widower came to woo," laughed mother, who hasn't outlived her sense of humor.

"I will," said I, and I meant it. "I'll exhaust the patience of dear Absalom, by not being able to understand what he says, and I'll frighten him out of proposing. See if I don't."

The first of the next week they came. I knew it was them when I saw a tall, loose-jointed young man, with a hat-brim wide enough for an awning crowning his brilliant hair, and an old lady arrayed in a showy delaine, and an old-fashioned sky-scraper bonnet, with a sachel on her arm, coming up the street.

"The Philistines are upon us," said I, poking my head into the parlor. "Remember, I've been deaf ever since I had the scarlet fever, last winter," which is true, in a certain degree.

"Yes, I'll remember," answered mother. "But think seriously of what you'll lose. He's 'stiddy an' a good provider, you know."

I heard them at the door by this time. Evidently Absalom wanted to appear used to the ways of the world, and was trying to unravel the mysteries hanging about the bell-pull, while his mother thought it best to not meddle with it.

"I don't see how the darn thing works," said Absalom, and before he could decide, his mother knocked.

I went and opened the door.

"How d'ye do?" exclaimed Mrs. Parker, with one of her "curechys." "Glad to see you lookin' so peart. This is my son Absalom, that I rit about. This is her, Absalom."

"I don't understand," said I. "You'll have to talk a little louder. I'm a trifle hard of hearing."

"My son Absalom," said Mrs. Parker, a good deal louder.

"Th?" said I, pretending to be as much at a loss as ever.

"Great Peter! she's deafe'n a post," said Mrs. Parker to her "son Absalom." Then, raising her voice so it could be heard all over the house, she proceeded to measure off her words, one by one:

"My son—absalom," pointing at the grinning youth, who had been ready to shake hands with me for some time.

"Oh, yes. How do you do?" said I, giving him my hand. "I'm real glad to see you. Come into the parlor, where mother is."

They followed me into the parlor, and I presented Absalom to mother.

"I didn't know Sophiar was deaf," remarked Mrs. Parker, as she sat down; "I had to screech at her afore she heard a word. It's a pity."

"Yes, it is," answered mother, with the corners of her mouth twitching. "But you see we're used to her, and don't mind it."

"Hain't you never tried anything for your ears?" voliterated Absalom, who felt awkward, and as if he ought to say something.

"Yes, a good many folks have died late years," I answered.

"Your ears?" roared Absalom, red in the face. "Hain't you doctored 'em?"

"Oh, I understand. Excuse my mistake. You talked so low at first," said I. "Yes, I have 'doctored' them, and I think I can hear better than I could."

"I should think it would tire you to talk to her," said Mrs. Parker to mother, "spec'ly if you'd much to say."

"Yes, it is a little fatiguing," answered mother. "But being used to it, we don't mind it as you do."

"No, I s'pose not," sighed Mrs. Parker. Then, to me: "Do you do the kitchen-work much?"

"Yes, I have read Dr. Tichenor's some," I answered. "He is a fine writer. I like him very much."

"Dear! what a pity!" exclaimed Mrs. Par-

ker to "my son Absalom." "I asked—if you did any—kitchen-work?" with awful emphasis on the last two words.

"Oh, yes; I do most of the work in the kitchen. I am a first-rate housekeeper, mother says."

"I told you so," declared Mrs. Parker to Absalom. "She made some awful good pies when I was here afore, and her mother said she made the sass, too. You'd better say suthin' to her. She'll expect it."

Thus urged, Absalom squared himself for the undertaking, by blowing his nose vigorously on a flaming-red handkerchief, and planting his number ten cowhide boots plump into the middle of the light square in the pattern of the carpet.

"How much do you pay for pertaters now?" he asked, with terrible solemnity.

"Eh?" said I, hardly able to keep from laughing in his face.

"Good Lord!" groaned Absalom. "She's a leetle the deafeest person I ever see." Then, to me:

"Pertaters! what do they bring?"

"Oh! you're going to hear her sing, eh?" said I, smiling pleasantly at the freckled-faced, terribly-embarrassed fellow. "She's a beautiful singer. You'll never regret having taken advantage of this opportunity, I am sure."

"Great Peter! she didn't git hold of it then," moaned Absalom, with a discouraged look at his mother. "If suthin' couldn't be done for her, I don't want to marry her. That's what ails Hanner."

"Mebbe she's deafe'n usual to-day," suggested his mother. Then, to me:

"Have you ever tried goose-liver?"

"That's so," I answered. "I haven't been away from home in a long while. I don't like to travel. There's so much noise and confusion, you know."

"I shouldn't think anything short of an 'arthquake' d' bother her," declared Absalom.

"She's wuss'n your grandfather was afore he died, an' it did seem't of we'd hev to holler so's 't w'd raise the neighbors, when we talked to him. I allus hev to laugh to think of yer father's tryin' to read a few passages to him jest afore he dropped away. He kep' a-sayin' 'louder, an' afore yer father got through he was a-shoutin' the Scriptures at him, two or three words at a time. It was a solum occashun, but I couldn't keep from feelin' 's it was ludickerous."

"I don't see how I'd go to work to ask her to hev me, if I wanted to," said Absalom, evidently disheartened, "thout everybody in the city hearin' me."

Dear! dear! I thought I must laugh! Then mother came in to announce dinner. Such fun as it was! If Mrs. Parker screamed pepper, I passed bread. If Absalom shouted "pertaters," I passed the castor. I could tell when either one of them was going to say something to me before they began to say it, because they laid down knife and fork, and "got ready for business." They couldn't talk to me and do anything else at the same time.

After dinner we kept up the same kind of conversation for an hour. At the end of that time, Mrs. Parker was tired out, and "my son Absalom" was completely disgusted.

"I wouldn't have her for Deakin Stiles' hull farm," he told his mother. "It's deafeenin' to hear a a-tryin' to make her understand, an' she don't morn'n half sense it, then."

"I wouldn't advise you to think o' marryin' her, 'thout suthin' could be done for her. Poor creetur. Seems as ef they might bore out her ears, someway."

"Mebbe the drums of 'em hev got out of kilter," suggested Absalom. "If they ain't right, she can't be helped any. I'm sorry she's so, for I kind o' like her 'pearance an' she seems smart."

That evening he made one last attempt at conversation with me.

"Do you—know any folk—here—by the name of—Podgers?" he vociferated in the jerky, spasmodic way both him and his mother had fallen into when talking to me.